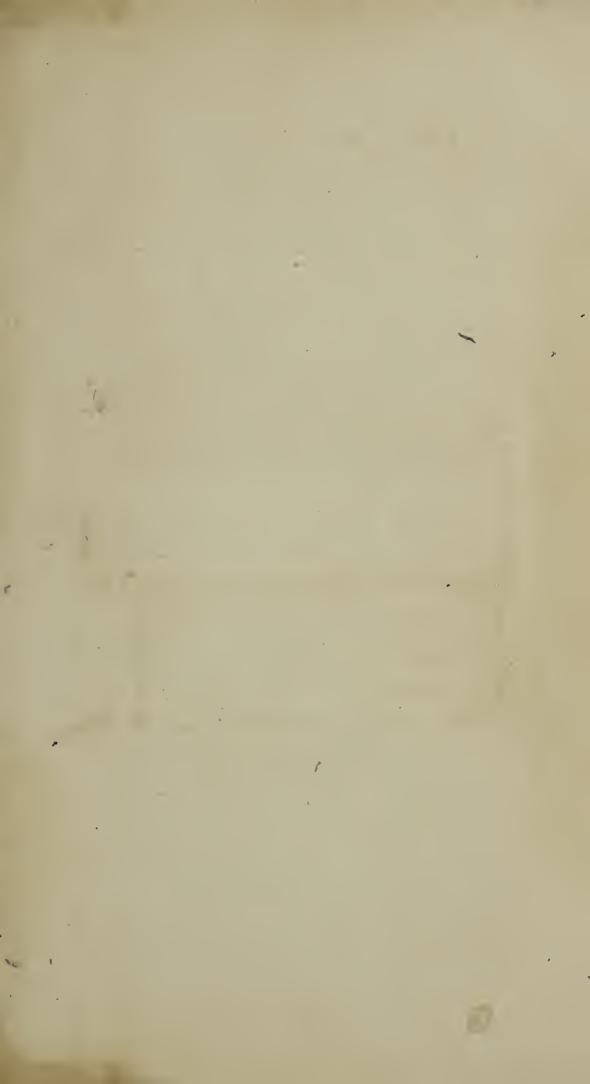
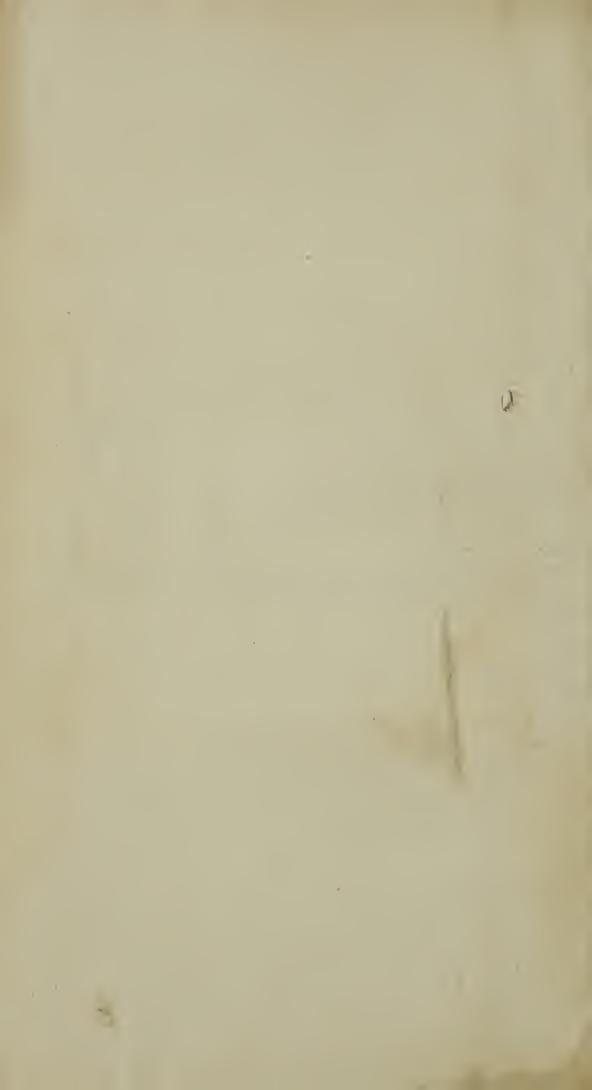
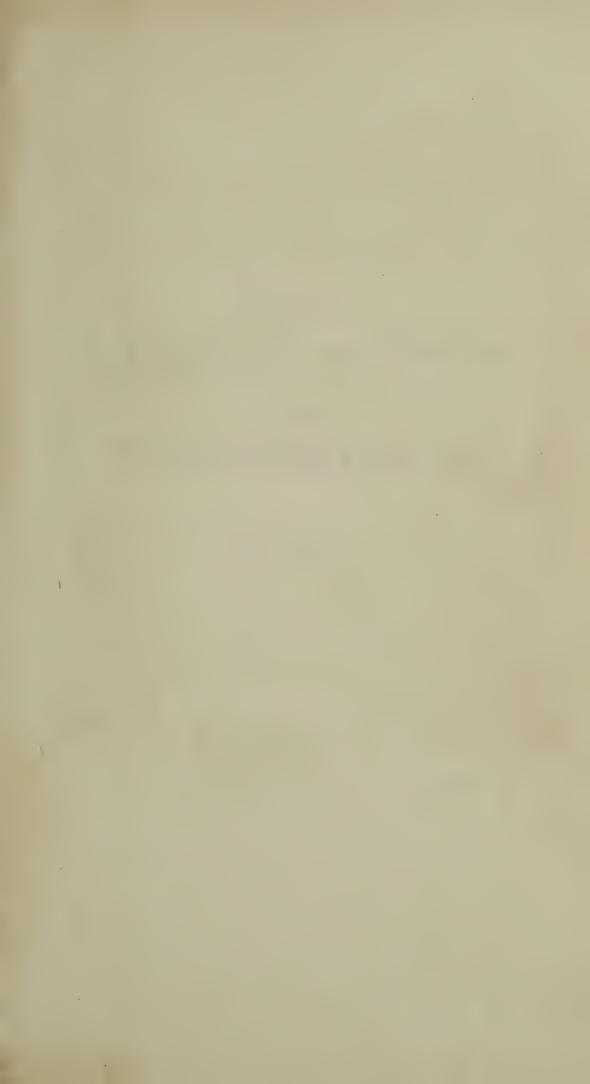
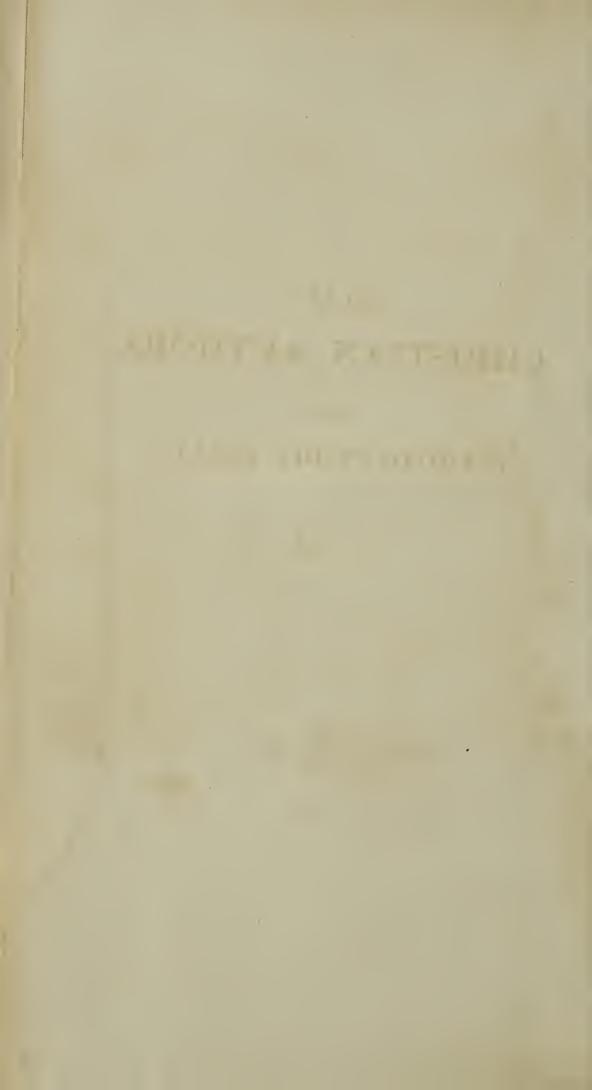
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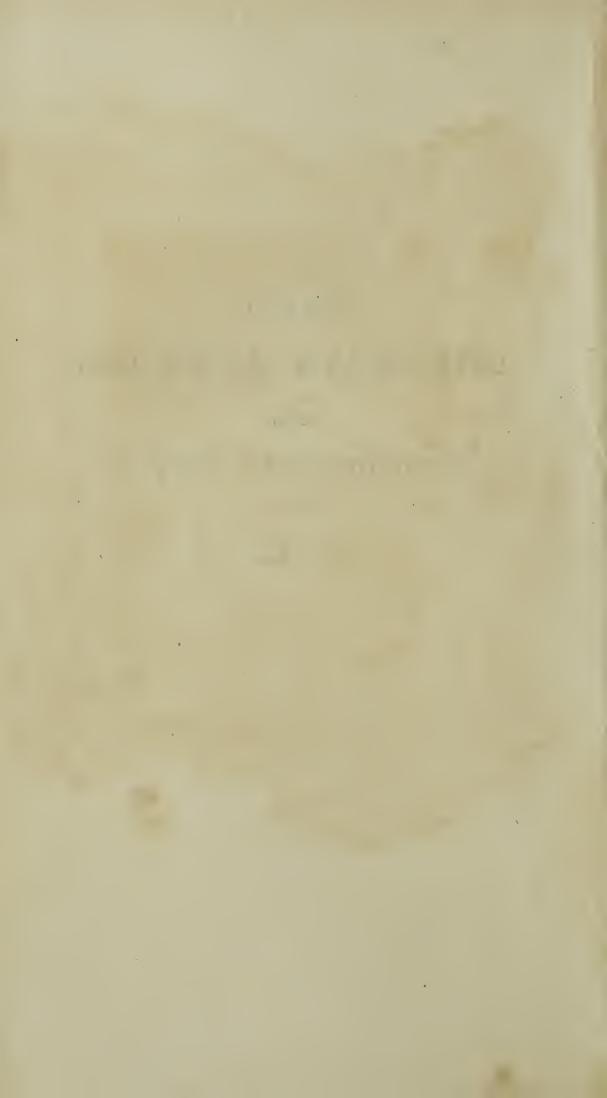


SELECT CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,

WITH

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS.

No. 43.







PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM COLLINS GLASGOW

SERIOUS

REFLECTIONS

ON

TIME AND ETERNITY.

JOHN SHOWER.

AND

ON THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR LATTER END,

AND OTHER

CONTEMPLATIONS.

 $\mathbf{B}\mathbf{Y}$

SIR MATTHEW HALE, KNT.

WITH

AN INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM COLLINS;

WILLIAM WHYTE & CO. AND WILLIAM OLIPHANT, EDINBURGH;
R. M. TIMS, AND WM. CURRY, JUN. & CO. DUBLIN;
G. B. WHITTAKER, AND HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO. LONDON.



INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THERE are certain truths, which lie remote from all direct and immediate observation—and which require more than one step on the part of the human mind, ere they are arrived at-which can only, in fact, be reached by a reasoning process, that consists of many steps; and for the describing of which, the habit of sustained attention, and the talent of sound and legitimate inference, and the power of combining principles which are known, and thence eliciting a truth or a doctrine that was unknown, must all be summoned to the work, and be put into strenuous and continued exercise for days, or often for months together, ere the toils of the devoted inquirer be rewarded by the discovery that he is in quest of. There is much, for example, both of mathematical and political science, which is incontrovertibly true, but which, instead of being taken up at one act by the understanding, as if it lay on the very surface of contemplation, can only be grasped into the possession of the mind, by being travelled to through a long intermedium of many transitions and many arguments-and they are only a gifted few who can

bear the fatigues of such a journey, and to whom the labours of the midnight oil afford a congenial and much-loved employment, and who have had their intellectual powers disciplined to the march of a logical or lengthened investigation. The Smith of the one science, and the Newton of the other, afford very striking illustrations of this kind of mental superiority over the rest of the species-and in virtue of which they were enabled to discover what before to the whole of mankind was utterly unknown; and in virtue of which their followers are enabled to see what the majority of mankind do not see. It is only seen in fact from a summit of demonstrationand this is only attained by a series of ascending movements-and the few who have made their way to the temple which stands upon such an emineuce as this, find inscribed upon it 'the temple of philosophy.' Now, what we maintain is, that this is altogether distinct from 'the temple of wisdom.' successful worshippers are men of reach and men of acquirement, and men who, from the elevation they have won, and on which they have posted themselves, can command a farther prospect over some walk, or some domain of the great intellectual territory, than their fellows around them. And yet they are not on this account men of wisdom, nor have we arrived at the true meaning and application of this epithet, if we either think that to be wise we must be philosophers, or that, if philosophers, we are therefore wise.

There are certain other truths, difficult of access, which are distinct, and distinguishable we think from those that we have just now adverted to—

not such as are gained by a continuous effort along a line of investigation—not such as come in view upon the eye of the beholder, after he has scaled one of the altitudes of science—not such as lie remote, by being placed at a distance, but such rather as lie hidden from common minds, because deeply enveloped under the surface of common observation. To come at these, is not to plod and to persevere from one acquisition to another, as in the former instances. It is done by a process perhaps, too, in which all the elements of ratiocination are concerned, but a process so rapid, as to be felt even by the owner of the mind through which it passes, like an act of momentary intuition. Such is the quickness of his penetrating eye, that what to others is a thick and impalpable vail, hides not from him the truth or the principle which lurks beneath it-and with one glance of perception, can he discern many of the secret things which lie under the broad and ostensible face of human affairs-and this faculty of his, though certainly sharpened by cultivation, and cradled up to its present maturity among the varieties of experience and of life, is not of slow operation like the former, but is sudden in all its exercises, and quite immediate in all the information which it fetches to its owner. One of its main offices is to detect what is latent, and, to ordinary minds, in-This it does accessible in the character of man. not by any tardy movement of the understanding, but by something like the tact of an instantaneous discernment, by the look of an instinctive sagacity, directed towards any exhibition either in the countenance or in the conduct of another. It is this

faculty which gives the eye of a lynx to the satirist; and which endues, with all his readiness and address, the wily ambassador, who, himself unseen, can cast a piercing intelligence through all the windings and intrigues of a cabinet; and which dexterously guides its possessor's way among the politics of a city corporation; and which even achieves, as wondrous triumphs as any of subtlety and skill among the severest collisions, or the low jockeyship of a market. It is far more diffused than science and scholarship are through the various ranks of society. You will meet with it in the homeliest walks of life-nay, sometimes, in all its perfection, under the guise, and in the attitude, of a country simpleton. It is not confined to the chicanery of courts. For the play of as deep and as dexterous artifice may be set agoing in the negotiations of private interest, as has ever been recorded in the annals of diplomacy. And whether it be swindling without the law, or swindling within the law, may there be the same over-reach of one shrewder understanding over the blind and unsuspecting confidence of another, in the contests of ordinary trade, as in the contests of politics. The man who is thus gifted, sees deeper than his fellows. He can read the vanity, or the weakness, or the delicacy which are in another's heart, and he can practice accordingly. It is true, that he may be thus wise as a serpent, and yet harmless as a dove. But the mere wisdom of the serpent is not true wisdom, in the soundest acceptation of the term. The epithet wise, according to its largest and its soundest acceptation, is neither exemplified by him, who, by dint of meditation, sees

farthest into the secrets of philosophy, or who, by dint of shrewd and oft-repeated observation, sees deepest into the mysteries of our nature—nor have we yet reached the conception of a truly wise man, if we think, that to be wise we must be political, or, that if political, we are therefore wise.

The consideration of our latter end, which forms the principal topic of the following Volume, is that which the Scripture affirms to be true wisdom. "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they considered their latter end." But the truth of our mortality, by the considering of which aright we are wise, belongs neither to the former, nor to the latter classification. We do not need to travel far in quest of its discovery. Neither do we need to dive among the recesses of a profound observation, that we may be able to fetch it up, and to appropriate it. It is a truth which, on the very highway of ordinary life, forces itself on the recognition of every That world, through which we are all journeying, abounds in the sign-posts of mortality; and many is the passing funeral which obtrudes this lesson upon our eyes; and many are the notes of that funeral bell which tolls it upon our hearing; -and well may the old, when they think of a former generation, levelled and taken off by the hand of death, learn how sure it is, that the living and busy society around them will at length be swept away; -and even to the young, and those the likeliest of us all, does death hang out its memorials, and gives them to know that it wields an indiscriminating arm; -and even from those whom it spares the longest, and comes to the last, may we learn how short a process

of arithmetic it is which conducts every one of us to our latter end, -and thus, through all the possible avenues of sense, and experience, and feeling, do such intimations multiply upon us, and these so plain and so powerful, and ever and anon recurring with such pathos and in such frequency, that, but to those who are sunk in idiotism, is it a lesson read and recognized of all men. Nor is there a living man who does not know, that the march of our actual generation is but one vast progressive movement to the grave. It is not the acquirement of new truths, but the right use and consideration of old ones, which constitutes wisdom. It is not the discovery of what was before unknown, which signalizes the wise man above his fellows. It is the right and the rational application of what they know as well as he, but which they do not reflect upon, and do not proceed upon as he. It is not the man who outpeers his acquaintances in intellectual wealth, neither is it the man who outdoes them in homebred sagacityit is neither the one nor the other, who, in the best, and most significant sense of the term, is the man of wisdom. It is he, who acts upon the sureness of that which is sure. It is he, who proceeds upon the reality of that which is real. It is he, who feels greatness of desire after that which is great, and smallness of desire after that which is small, and shapes his doings to the actual dimensions of every object which is presented to his understanding. And neither is it necessary that, in respect of understanding, he should have a capacity for more than truths which are familiar to all, and are acknowledged of all. He has not to go in quest of strange or distant novelties, but only to trace to its right purpose that which is near to him, and within reach of every man. In a word, he has not to learn that which is known only to a few, he has only to consider that which is known to all. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" He has not to be taught the number of his days, but taught so to number them, as to apply his heart unto wisdom.

He is not in the soundest physical condition, who lives on the high-wrought delicacies of an artificial and expensive preparation; but he, the organs of whose bodily constitution are best suited to the bread and the water, and the universal aliments which nature has provided for the healthful sustenance of her children. And he is neither in the best spiritual, nor even in the best intellectual condition, the faculties of whose soul are ever on the stretch after lofty and recondite doctrine, or its appetite for knowledge pre-occupied with various and exquisite speculation—but he, who thrives on the daily nourishment of such truth as is familiar to all-he, whose clear and vigorous eye admits most copiously of that light, which is poured around the orbit-he, the food of whose understanding is that common food which is most abundant, and would also be most salutary, but for the common disease that overspreads the families of our species-he who, with no taste and no capacity for what is remote or ingenious, rightly comprehends the truth that is at hand, and goes not beyond the simple elements of being in any of his mental exercises, but who, if right in these, has reached a wisdom which philosophy cannot reach, and who, if sound in his

practical estimate of what is due to Time, and what is due to Eternity, is a man of nobler aims, and far more solid and exalted wisdom, than science can induce upon any of its votaries. He lives not upon the niceties, but upon the staple of spiritual fare, and his spiritual frame is thereby upheld in strength and in prosperity; and in the plain certainties of the coming death, and the coming judgment, does he walk in a way more truly elevated, than that which is trodden by any son of literary ambition: and hence the impress of dignity and wisdom which we have seen to sit on the aspect of him, who, the father of a cottage family, has no respite from toil but Sabbath, and no reading but his much-read Bible, and that authorship, of old and humble piety, which lies in little room upon his shelves. To learn discriminatively and justly what wisdom is, you have just to place the most brilliant and accomplished philosopher by the side of this venerable sage of Christianity. The one knows much, but his is a knowledge which terminates in itself. The other knows little, but his is a knowledge which is turned to the purpose of his guidance here, and of his provision for eternity hereafter. Wisdom is not bare knowledge. It is knowledge directed to its best and fittest, and most productive application. Thus it is, that there may be much knowledge without wisdom, and there may be much wisdom with little knowledge. It is not he who knows most, who is most wise, but he, who uses aright that which is known and familiar to all men. For, let it be observed, that it is with spiritual as with natural food. The most useful ingredients of it are the most abundant. Men may refuse to par-

take of them, and starve and die, and thus become, what the majority of our species actually are-dead in trespasses and sins. To bring a man alive again from the apparent death of nature, we never think of wooing back the departed senses by the offer of luxuries. But we admit a supply of air, and try if he can breathe in this universal element; and make use of cold water, which is to be had in every dwellingplace; and ply his taste with some simple preparation; and could we restore him to the common enjoyment of these very commonest articles, we would be satisfied. And so it is in the case of spiritual torpor. To call it back to sensibility, we would never think of elaborate demonstration. But we would ring into our patient's ears the message of death, which every body knows, but few know with application. We would try to awaken his inner man, by the tidings of its immortality, which all profess to have faith in, while scarcely any human being lives under the power of it. We would sound the trump of alarm, and loudly speak of an angry God and a coming vengeance, notes as familiar to his hearing as is that of the wind of heaven which blows over him, while, in their terror and in their urgency, they are as unfelt by the soul, as if its ears of communication with a human voice were altogether closed. We would deal forth upon him the simplicities of the gospel-and tell of sin and of the Sacrifice-intimations which may be as readily taken up by the peasant as by the philosopher—but which, until roused from their carnal lethargy, are alike unheeded by them both. To recal them from such a paralysis as this, we would not ply them with that which is

severe and elaborate, but would, if possible, quicken and revive them by that which is elementary. And not he who is led on by argument to that which is remote, but he who receives the touch of a quickening influence from that, the certainty of which is obvious to all, while the sense of it is nearly unfelt by all—he it is who hath attained the only true understanding—he it is who is wise unto salvation. We cannot but perceive, how, while the doc-

trines of our faith are plain, in opposition to what is recondite, not requiring, like the difficulties of science, a prolonged and strenuous investigation-yet still, plain as they are, they need the influence of the Spirit for the true understanding of them, just as a dead body needs the touch of some miraculous personage, ere it can breathe the all-encompassing atmosphere, or use the universal elements, or be sustained by the common bounties of nature. And so of the soul. It is not by conducting it through any lengthened, or logical demonstration of the schools, that we restore it to that intelligence, the possession of which assures the possessor of life everlasting. It is by visiting it with the manifestation of certain great and impending, but withal simple realities. The wisdom which is thus gotten, is altogether distinct from the wisdom of philosophy -hidden in fact from many such wise, and many such prudent, and revealed unto babes.

Let us just look to the practical habit of nature, and see that, in the face of the clearest and plainest arithmetic, it gives a superiority to the present over the future world, and then may we acknowledge, that if it be needful to heal the diseased eyes of the

blind, ere they can see of the common light, or to heal the diseased lungs of the consumptive, ere they can breathe aright of the common air, or to heal the diseased constitution of the sickly, ere they can turn into aliment the common food of all men,—so is it equally needful that a physician's hand be laid upon our diseased spirits, ere they be nourished by truths so palpable, as that eternity is greater than time, and the enjoyment of God in heaven, greater than that of all those earthly blessings which he causes to descend on our fleeting pilgrimage.

We know not on whom it is, that the burden of this sore disease still lies, in all its native aggravation, or from whom it has been taken away. We can only address our admonitions to the reader at a venture. It is like the shooting of an arrow among a multitude, when who knows what individual will be struck by it? It is under the declaration of the truth, that a child of darkness becomes a child and a disciple of light. But even the same truth which awakens the former, is the very truth which needs to be repeated, again and again, in the hearing of the latter, to keep him awake. The pure mind must be stirred up in the way of remembrance. And it is not enough that truth be received at the first; in the language of the Bible, it must also be considered. The food which is taken in is of no use, unless, by a digestive process, it be turned into aliment. Truth is the food of the soul. We receive it by faith. But if we keep it not in memory, we, in the words of the Apostle, have believed in vain. The shortness of life, and the certainty of its approaching extinction, may come

upon the spirit in a powerful, but momentary visitation. This gleam of light must be brightened, and sustained, and perpetuated. It must be kept alive amid the shock of many rude and adverse elements. It must shine as a lamp upon all our paths. The converse of this world's companies should not darken The heat and the hurry of our daily business should not stifle it. That sorrow which worketh death, should not swallow it up into the oblivion of our immortality, nor should the still more dangerous gale of prosperity blow this pure and sacred flame into utter annihilation. It is not enough that we acknowledge the truth at stated times; we must give earnest heed to it, lest at any time we should let it slip. It is not enough that we should know our latter end-nor has our understanding of this been advanced into true wisdom, till it be our care and our habit to consider our latter end.

The practical habit of our souls ought to be a habit of anticipation, and of anticipation reaching even unto death, and to the immortality which lies beyond it. A realizing sense of what that is, which a coming futurity is to bring with speed, and perhaps with suddenness, to our doors, would change the habit and posture of the soul altogether. Could we only figure to our imaginations the ebbing, and the quivering, and the agony of death, and then charge ourselves with the certainty that death is coming,—could we be ever looking onwards to the day when the last trumpet shall call us from our graves to the judgment-seat, and give a settled home in our bosoms to the truth of this awful revelation, that judgment is coming,—could we carry our frequent and daily thoughts to

the margin of eternity, and, after contrasting the delight and the dreariness of its two immeasurable regions, with the interests of that short-lived day which separates the morning from the evening of our existence in the world, consider how surely, on the rapid wing of succession, eternity is coming,and simple as these ponderings are, let them just enter with the power which they ought, and in the new complexion which they cast on all that is intermediate between us and eternity, and they will both give us other minds, and make other men of us. These truths are plain enough for the peasant—but there is in them a challenging authority, which reaches even unto the prince. They are fit for the homeliest understandings. Yet homely as they are, may they be offered to men of all ranks, and all classes in society, and they do look hard upon the pursuits of our existing generation. With so mighty an instrument of demonstration, as the calculus of those months that will soon pass away, and of those years that are so easily summed up, do we bring the lesson of our mortality to bear upon them. And be they the children of wealth, resting their security on that corruptible foundation, of which gold and silver are the materials, -or be they children of poverty, who think that they have lost their all, because, without a portion in time, they have cast eternity, as a thing of worthlessness, away from them, -or, in a word, be their condition what it may, let them be of that innumerable multitude who use the world not as a road, but as a residence,—we tell them that they are carnally-minded, and if not arrested on the way, they are fast posting to that death which is the doom

of all who are so. Awaken, awaken, from these manifold delusions by which nature is encompassed!—and seek to be spiritually-minded, that you may have life and peace.

So closely allied is the consideration of our latter end with the very essence of wisdom, that we know not a likelier expedient for shutting us up, and that immediately, unto Christ-unto him, who is called the wisdom of God, as well as the power of God—unto him, in comparison of the excellency of whose knowledge all was but loss, in the estimation of the Apostle; insomuch, that he determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. What is it that makes us tarry in the great work of seeking a secure righteousness before God? It is because we feel secure enough in the mean time with the possession of health, and the enjoyment of a warm and well-sheltered home, and the engrossments of business, and the delights of a gay, and pleasing, and varied companionship. These, mixed up with a tolerable sense of our own decencies, and our own duties, serve altogether to make us easy in this evil world, and to keep off from our imaginations all that can give dread or disturbance in the thought of another world. The truth is, that in these circumstances, and with these feelings, the question, "Wherewithal shall I appear before God?" is never seriously entertained. It does not come upon the mind with the urgency of a matter in hand, -and, in reference to the undoubted fact, that the most earthly men are also the most inimical to that doctrine which affirms the ground of our evangelical acceptance before God, we believe the secret but substantial explanation of the whole matter to be, that the soul which keeps a firm hold upon time, is careless and thoughtless about the goodness of its foundation for eternity. He likes this world best, and if he make good a portion here, he will not trouble himself with any nice or scrupulous examination of what that is, which makes the best titledeed for an inheritance hereafter. And this will explain a fact which we think must be familiar to many—the very summary process upon which a man of the world comes to his easy and agreeable conclusion on the question of his eternity-the very comfortable balance which he strikes between his good points and his bad ones-so as to set aside all his sins from the final result of this computation, and bring into view nothing but his humanities and his virtues, on which to rear a confidence before God. It is not by fully tracing, but, in the language of parliament, by blinking the question, that he comes to a deliverance which is satisfying enough to his mind about the world at a distance, amid so much to satisfy him, in the visible and surrounding world with which he has presently to do. It makes all the difference, between the earnestness of our preparation to meet the creditor, who threatens instant diligence upon our person, and the creditor whose application for payment we can, by an act of the fancy, put off, and postpone to an indefinite distance away from us. And next time you see a thriving, prosperous, good-humoured man of the world evince his hatred of the doctrine of faith, and of all that is said about acceptance in Christ, and a right basis of justification before the eye of the Lawgiver —before you admit the soundness of his notions about a safe and sufficient passport to eternity—consider well whether eternity be at all a matter of concern with him—and whether it is not the entertainment of sense which gives him all his delight, and the business of sense which gives him all

his occupation.

Now, conceive the two elements of eternity and time to be so revealed to his soul, as to stand in their just and naked proportion before him. Conceive, that the one is seen advancing in nearness and magnitude towards him, and the other as fast flitting into evanescence away. Conceive the scales so to fall from his eyes, that, through all the delusions which the god of this world spreads over the surface of what is present and visible, he beholds the impressive mockery which death stamps upon every enjoyment that is on this side of it; and feels, that if he fall short of the enjoyment which is on the other side of it, he is undone. Let all this be only mixed up with a right sense of sin and of the Saviour—and not one momentwill intervene, ere, under the curse and consciousness of the one, he seeks for deliverance from the other. Let him thus be made to hear the footsteps of the last messenger-and he will feel all the urgency of a present claim and of a present creditor at his door; and he will be driven to the necessity of a present settlement, and he will not be so easily set at rest about the footing upon which he stands. search for securities, will be the search of a man in earnest; and a real practical earnestness is all that we require—assured, as we are, that the man who is truly seeking for a foundation, will not be satisfied

till he finds a solid one; and that out of the frail materials of human virtue no such foundation can be formed; and that an obedience, rendered without heart, and mixed up with all the infirmities both of forgetfulness and pollution, will never quiet the conscience of him who has at all been visited by a realizing sense of these things. Thus it is, that to consider our latter end is to tread on one of the likeliest pathways to the Saviour. Nor do we know a more effectual way of being prompted forward to that place of refuge-where we shall find a blood to wash away our guilt, and a righteousness that can never fail us. So that, could we only demonstrate with power, how short-lived the period, and how tottering the basis of all earthly enjoyments, we should not despair of soon finding the alarmed sinner within his secure resting-place, on that foundation which God hath laid in Zion.

There is often, in the pencilled descriptions of the moralist, a kind of poetical and high-wrought imagery thrown around the chamber of death; and that, whether it be the terrors of guilt, or the triumphs of conscious virtue, which are conceived to mark this closing scene of our history in the world. It is well to know what the plain and experimental truth is, upon the subject. In the case of a worldly and alienated life, the remorse is not nearly so pungent, the apprehensions not nearly so vivid and terrifying, the impression of future and eternal realities not nearly so overpowering, as we are apt to fancy upon such an occasion. The truth is, that as it was throughout the whole of his living, so it is generally in dying. He is still engrossed with present

and sensible things; and there is positively nothing in the mere approach of dissolution that can raise up the ascendency of faith, or render him less the slave of sight, and of the body, than he was before. There is the present pain, there is the present thirst, there is the present breathlessness; and if, amid the tumults of his earthly fabric giving way, and the last irregular movements of its deranged mechanism fast drawing to their cessation, he send for the minister to sooth him by his prayers, even he forms but one of the present varieties. There is no actual going forth of the patient's mind towards the things which are above. The faith which he has so long shut out, does not now force its entrance into a bosom, habituated to the reception of no other influences, than what the world, and the things of the world, have so long exercised over him. We may see torpor upon such an occasion, and call it serenity. We may witness an uncomplaining silence, and call it resignation. We may never hear one note of alarm to drop from the lips of the dying sufferer; and therefore say that he met with Christian fortitude his end. But all these may meet upon a death-bed; and yet, the positive confidence of looking forward to heaven as a home, a positive rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, a believing, and a knowing, that "when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, they shall have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," may never enter his bosom. There may be the peacefulness of insensibility, even while the life of him who has been a stranger to the faith of the gospel is waning to its extinction-but a peace

mixed up with the elevation of such prospects as these, is never felt, apart from the thought of Christ as "the Lord our righteousness." It is altogether a romance to talk of such anticipations of triumph, to him who looks back upon his own obedience, and then looks forward to his rightful and his challenged reward. If we want our dying hour to have the radiance of heaven's gate thrown over it-if we want, amid the failure of expiring nature, to have some firm footing, on which we might strongly and securely rest; there is positively none other, but that to which the consideration of our latter end should now be urging us forward-and, therefore, should we call upon ourselves now to take up with Christ as our foundation, and to associate all our confidence in God, with the obedience which he has wrought, with the ransom which he has rendered.

We cannot better enforce these solemn considerations on the minds of our readers, with the view of shutting them up to the faith that is in Christ, than by referring them to Shower's "Serious Reflections on Time and Eternity," and Sir MATTHEW HALE "On the Consideration of our Latter End." In SHOWER'S excellent Treatise, they will find the serious reflections of a mind, which, by the habit of solemn consideration, and the exercise of a vigorous faith, habitually felt the power and the reality of those important truths, respecting which mankind in general maintain an obstinate, and almost incurable heedlessness. There is scarcely any form of words, or any mode of computation, or any point of contrast, which he has not employed, to give the reader a vivid and substantive impression of the

littleness of Time, and the greatness of Eternity. The truths on which he insists, are truths of the plainest and most elementary kind; but thoroughly aware that the practical consideration of them constitutes the essence of true wisdom, he endeavours, by the most forcible arguments, and the most touching appeals, and the most persuasive earnestness, to arrest mankind in their career of thoughtlessness and unconcern, and to turn their resolute and sustained attention to the consideration of their latter end, and so to number their days, that they may apply their hearts to that highest of all wisdom-a preparation for the coming eternity; and with the real and tender solicitude of men in earnest, lay to heart those things which pertain to their everlasting peace, ere time be hid from their eyes.

The "Consideration of our Latter End," and the other kindred pieces of Sir Matthew Hale, are not only marked by the same solemn earnestness, but possess all that graphic power of thought, and depth of experimental feeling, which characterise the writings of this extraordinary man. We have already adverted, in a former Essay,* to the character and writings of this great and good man, which precludes the necessity of our entering into any farther exposition of them. But we cannot help observing, that if Sir Matthew Hale, whose genius and learning rendered him one of the most distinguished ornaments of his age, and whose character and wisdom still associate him in England's

^{*} Judge Hale on the Knowledge of Christ Crucified, and other Divine Contemplations, with an Introductory Essay, by the Rev. David Young.

best remembrances, with the noblest of her worthies, counted it a wisdom superior to all human learning, to consider his latter end-and if, amidst the numerous and important avocations of that high official station which he occupied, rendered still more arduous and difficult, by the anarchy and confusion of that revolutionary period in which he lived, this good man was not unmindful to address those monitory lessons to his countrymen, which we now present anew, as salutary admonitions to the present generation,—then have we a testimony to the worth and surpassing excellence of this wisdom, above all the acquisitions of science and philosophy, which cannot be disregarded, without incurring the imputation of folly. Science and human learning we hold in high estimation, and let them be diffused throughout every corner of our land; but what we affirm is, that they do not meet the necessities of man's moral constitution. The man of science may be rich in all these acquisitions, and yet be destitute of that knowledge which forms a right preparation for the duties of time, or a sound preparation for the glories of eternity, while the humble peasant, whose mind has never been illumined with science, may be illustrious in wisdom of a far higher order, and, by turning the consideration of his latter end to its right and practical use, may have attained to that knowledge in which the Apostle determined alone to glory, "the knowledge of Jesus Christ and him crucified."

It is the great design of such a consideration, to lead us to that gospel which is freely offered to all. But though the gospel be offered freely, it only be-

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comes ours by our receiving it freely; and seldom is it so received by him who, after being laid on the bed of his last sickness, has still a Saviour to seek, instead of a Saviour to enjoy. The evil heart of unbelief, which he has cherished through life, cleaves to him, and keeps its hold till the last hour of it; and, therefore, never does the mind entertain a delusion more ruinous, never is eternity placed on a more desperate stake, than by those who put away from them now the offers of salvation, and think that then they shall have it for the taking. It is the part, then, of all to look forthwith and earnestly to the Saviour-to contemplate him in his revealed offices-to make a real and intelligent work of closing with him-to receive him as their atonementto render allegiance to him as their Lord and their Proprietor-and submit themselves unto Him, that he might rule in them by his Spirit, and over them by his Law. Whether they be the unconverted, who have yet to lay hold of Christ, or the already converted, whose business it is to keep that holdwe know not how the consideration of their latter end can be turned more substantially to the purposes of wisdom and of true understanding, than by leading them supremely to prize, and immediately to acquire, that knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, which is life everlasting.

T. C.

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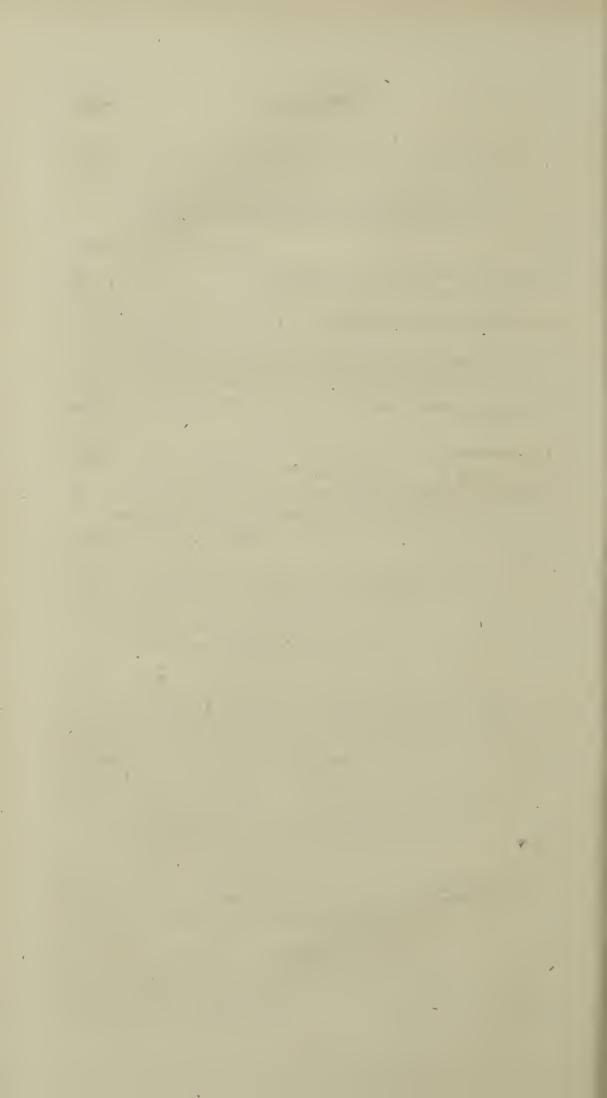
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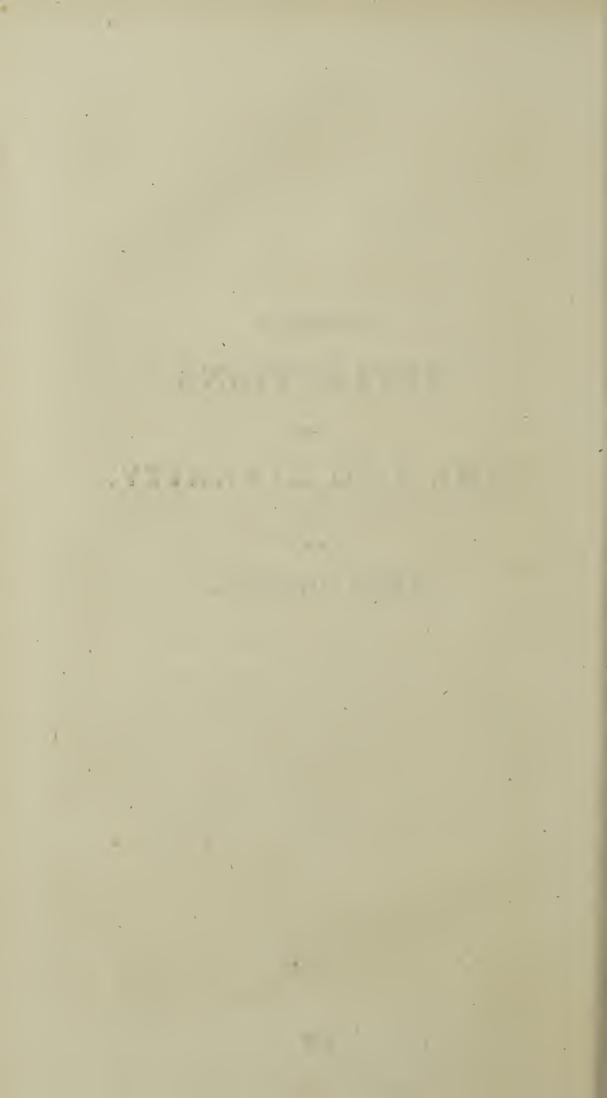
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REFLECTIONS

ON.

TIME AND ETERNITY.

JOHN SHOWER.



THE READER.

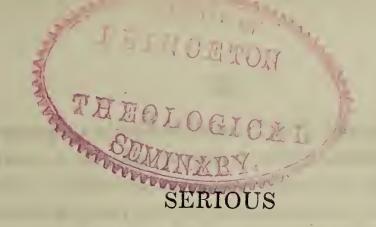
Whatever is likely to awaken men to the consideration of the great acknowledged principles of religion, cannot be unseasonable; and, when it is every man's concern, the meanest and weakest endeavours may be of some use. The subjects of the following reflections are of that kind most necessary to be attended to by all sorts of persons; and so cannot be too often pressed, though in different manners.

Some may possibly give this book a reading, as a new-year's gift. And whoever shall be so far persuaded by it, as to set apart some time, in the beginning of the year, for self-examination, confession of sin, repentance, thanksgiving, and solemn renewal of his covenant with God, (which several of these reflections may not only excite to, but are intended to direct and assist him in,) I am persuaded he will thank me for putting him in mind, at least, of so seasonable an exercise. The greatest part of these meditations were begun on a new-year's day, though some others are thought fit to be inserted, as tending to promote the same. But, knowing how much easier it is to stir up other men's devotion than to command and keep alive my own, it is desired that

the most devout thoughts, contained in these papers, may be looked upon as what the Author aims at, and would persuade to, rather than what he hath already attained; as what he knows he ought to be, and do, and doth seriously endeavour, rather than what he is, and hath been; heartily lamenting wherein he hath been faulty or defective in such duties, as these and the like reflections do oblige to, and enforce upon all who should read them, and therefore much more upon himself.

They were penned at several times, and in occasional retirements for spiritual exercises; and, if I may hereby render any service to the souls of men, if any secure sinner, any self-deceiving hypocrite, or backsliding Christian, be hereby awakened, or any serious Christian's devotion be quickened and advanced, I hope God will accept it. To his blessing I humbly recommend it for those ends.

J. SHOWER.



REFLECTIONS

ON

TIME AND ETERNITY.

SECTION 1.

Of the changeable state and short duration of earthly things, especially of man; how little it is considered and believed; how necessary it should be.

When I consider that yesterday was the conclusion of the last year, and that I am now entered on another, it is seasonable to reflect on the mutable condition and short duration of all things in this world, which are measured by time. That, as they have their beginning, so they have their end; and that the distance or space of time between the one and the other is very little. Let me not then, O my soul! rejoice and please myself too much in new enjoyments, remembering a change may be at hand, and the end is certain.

Many, who were rich and flourishing the last year, may be reduced to poverty and deep distress

before the end of this; who are now in a capacity to relieve others, within a few months, or a shorter space, may be objects of other men's charity. "The thing which hath been is that which may be;" and that which hath been seen in one year may happen in another: so easily, so quickly, may a change be made! Riches may unexpectedly change their owners, and borrow wings of a thousand accidents, wherewith to fly to heaven for a new disposal. therefore, who possess, should be as if they possessed not; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Innumerable casualties may effect that change, which no human art or skill can possibly foresee or hinder. Afflictive unexpected evils attend us every where: we cannot promise ourselves tranquillity for a day, much less one year to come. They lie in wait for us on every side, enter at every crevice, and commonly overtake us when we are least apprehensive of their approach. "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh up as a flower, and is cut down; fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not." What then are riches, beauty, strength, and honour, the accidents of this substance, which is itself but a shadow!

How false is the hope of man, and how frail is all his glory! One day can make an end of all his riches and honours: and yet what solicitude, care, and labour, to get what we desire of these things, (though often we do not need them,) and then to keep what we have gotten, and then to increase it, and then to defend it, and at last to enjoy it; and, in a moment, it is snatched from us, or we from it! His life is but a vapour, on which they all depend;

then how much less are they? To how speedy an alteration are they subject! What numberless instances of this doth one year's experience furnish! What saddening disappointments and unexpected calamities have befallen many since this day twelvemonth! and multitudes who are now at case, and think their mountains too strong to be removed, shall meet with sharper trials before the end of this year. Alas! how few consider or believe it, till they find it so! All men should count upon trouble and disappointment, suffering and sorrow, in this world; and he that hath the least share is reckoned the most prosperous man; and yet he knows not how soon his portion may be doubled. We reckon our joys by the absence of some degrees of sorrow and calamity that others meet with; and before the end of this year our condition may be as disconsolate as theirs.

O my soul! though I know this to be true; though I cannot, I dare not deny it; yet how difficult is it to conquer the love of this world, and of this body, to that degree I ought! to undervalue the interest of a short, a mutable, uncertain, and troublesome life, in comparison of the permanent possession of an everlasting good! though I know that what is earthly and temporal must needs be thus changeable and fading, and that it is as true of man himself as of any thing under the sun; yet how do I forget what man is! not only mutable in this state, his body, and his life, but in his mind too, so as to love and hate, to choose and neglect, to delight in and abhor, such things at one time as he did not before. He doth not pass the same judgment, nor retain the same affections, at one time as at another. How do

I live, as if all this were as certainly false as it is unquestionably true! Admire, love, fear, trust, in man, as if he were the direct contrary to what he is, and seek for immortality upon earth, and act as if I were assured of it, and were not liable to any change; though I acknowledge and know the con-Though the last year's experience, and the observation of every day, convince me of it; though all history and all the records of the grave attest it; though all mankind, in every age, have found it so; though it be a manifest notorious truth, legible in the various changes and calamities, but especially in the dust and ashes of all who have lived before us, (our graves being often made of our predecessor's dust, and the earth we bury in having once been living,) yet how little is it believed, how seldom considered! the confirmation of it, which one year gives us, hath little influence on our hearts or lives with respect to the next. We ought, therefore, to accustom ourselves to these thoughts, before such changes happen, to which our final change shall, ere long, succeed. They will be less efficacious if never admitted till our minds are oppressed and enfeebled by the weight of affliction. We shall then want that vigour of reason which should co-operate with the remedy; and which, if used beforehand, would help to support and stay our minds, under all subsequent For those considerations may be able revolutions. to fix and stay our minds under changes that may not be sufficient to recover and raise our spirits after they are dejected and fallen.

SECTION II.

Of the change in men's inclinations, opinions, and actions, which one year shows; how observable it is in others; how much more discernible in ourselves. Honour and reputation, &c. how uncertainly preserved and how easily blasted.

What a discovery doth one year make of the mutability of man, not only of his outward condition but of the man himself; his temper, his practice, his inclinations, his aversions, &c. He abideth not at one stay; every breath of wind turns him to another shape. We despise to-day that which we admired yesterday; and to-morrow hate the object of our present love. We begin friendships and cancel them on slight occasions; and a mortal enmity often succeeds to a tender affection: the very persons who are, in one year, our darling friends, and possibly deserved to be so, may yet be open enemies the next, and seek our ruin. "Lord, what is man!" How deceitful and mutable the heart of man! we know not what other men are, or will prove to be, till a trial; and we are equally ignorant concerning ourselves till an hour of temptation. How patiently do we think we could bear afflictions till we feel them! how partial and erroneous a judgment do we make of our wisdom and strength, in reference to the future! we counsel others to submission and resignation in the most difficult trials, and wonder they complain so loud; when we ourselves despond

and sink under half their burthen; and send up our more impatient murmurs to heaven when God thinks fit to prove us by a lighter stroke. We censure and condemn others who are in a higher station, and are called to more difficult work than we; when, by a little advancement, and the like temptations, we discover that we are as bad as they. They, who were reputed humble, temperate, and religious, when they have been exalted higher, become proud, sensual, and ungodly. Had some been told a twelvemonth since what now they are, and speak, and act, they would have made Hazael's answer, "Am I dog, that I should do this?" A change of the public affairs of the state, and by that means of particular interests, or some alteration of our own private circumstances, (calling us to new duties, and exposing us to new temptations,) discovers us more to ourselves, and to other men, than was expected, and proves us to be very different from what we appeared to be.

Such a change, for instance, as from poverty to riches; from sickness to health; from obscurity to honour; from privacy to a public charge, &c. or the contrary. Men cannot bear the weight of temporal happiness, but riches and honours make us to be other men than before we seemed to be. How weak a thing is man! that cannot carry his own wishes without falling under them; that cannot prosper in his designs without being changed, in the temper of his mind, upon every success. So true is it that "Man in honour is like the beast that perisheth;" and changed ordinarily for the worse, as to serious religion. May we not fear, that some, who, a year since, dared not live a day in the

neglect of closet and family devotion, do now omit it for many days and weeks together? and that some, who once were careful to improve the whole Sabbath to religious purposes, now place the whole of their religion in attending the public worship, and think it enough, not for that day only, but for the whole week. Under the afflicting hand of God, or some apprehensions of an approaching change, or sense of guilt upon great transgressions, the convictions of sin are lively, conscience is sensible and awake, affections warm, resolutions strong, &c. But, alas! how soon doth the case alter! our spirits cool, our zeal abates, our good purposes untwist and die, and come to nothing. By degrees we return to folly, and boldly venture on that sin we lately trembled at; through the want of continued smart afflictions, or of a serious awakening ministry, and friendly admonition; or through the temptations of vain company, and the remaining power of fleshly lusts: so that we falsify our most sacred promises and resolutions, violate our holy vows, cancel the bonds of God upon us, suffer the devil to re-enter and prevail again, to take possession of our hearts, and yield ourselves an easy prey to his temptations, till our latter end be worse than our beginning.

Oh! what a change doth one year let us see in persons as well as things! in ourselves as well as other men! And, as it is with man himself, so with every thing that he values himself upon, or for which he is esteemed by others; and even his esteem and reputation are also changeable and uncertain. Not to instance in riches, but in what is nobler, learning, and the improvements of the mind by study;

how soon may the violence of a disease disturb or stupify the brain, to that degree, as shall reduce the greatest scholar to the pitied condition of a fool or bedlamite? and where is his reputation and renown in such a case? But much less than that will blast the fairest reputation with the far greatest part of the world: it may be lost by unwary mistakes, by false reports, by envy and malice, by the subtle hatred of enemies, or by the weakness and credulity of friends, (who will listen to every backbiter's story,) or by one or two indiscretions of the man himself; and no man can be certain to secure his reputation whilst he lives, much less after he is dead. Who can content all men, however he lives? And who is well spoken of by all when he is dead? Who is so esteemed that some do not despise him? The wisest conduct cannot hinder but some will judge hardly and amiss.

How vain and faulty is an ambition to be talked of after we are dead, which will be but by very few, and that very differently, and but for a little while. "There is no remembrance of former things, neither shall there be of things to come, with those that shall come after." For how little a while do the proudest monuments last, that are set over the rotten flesh and bones of many, to preserve their memory? God hath promised, it is true, that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance;" but it must be understood so far only as the frame and state of this world, and the revolutions and vicissitudes of time will permit. But what good can it do us farther than the interest of God's glory, and the good of others is concerned in it? The

blessed will not need it, and the damned have no advantage by it. And no endeavours can be certain of success: for people will talk of us as they please; and their opinions very often change from one extreme to the other. But he who hath the loudest fame, shall only be talked of a little longer than his neighbours; and that by a few dying men, that must themselves be ere long forgotten. And how small a part of the inhabited world is acquainted so much as with the name of the greatest men in Europe! And how different and contrary are men's opinions and discourses of them, where they are known and talked of! And how many holy excellent persons are buried in oblivion, or misrepresented as unworthy to live on earth, whose names will be found in the book of life! Our life is yet as mutable and uncertain as any of theirs. time is hastening when we shall be too old to live, but at that time we are old enough to die. Our breath is in our nostrils; and though there be room enough for it to go out, we have no assurance that we shall have power to draw it in again.

SECTION III.

Of the uncertainty of living to the period of another year. The vanity of this life; the swiftness of time; and how to be improved.

I now begin another year: but what assurance have I to outlive it? I cannot say how soon my

sovereign Judge may call me hence, and summon me to appear before his righteous bar. O let me not defer my necessary preparation for death, which may be nearer than I imagine! let me mind the great things first, which are of absolute necessity to be done, some time or other, before I die. This perishing body, which I have pampered and indulged, at the expense of so much cost and time, may be putrifying in a silent grave before half this year be passed. Lord! bless this thought, to awaken my diligent endeavours to secure the blessedness of eternity! to mortify the desire of great things for myself, in future years, by the considered possibility of dying before the end of this! let me look into the graves of others, and consider that this may quickly happen to me, and must, ere long, be my own case: let me think what this body will shortly be, when it hath been six or eight days separated from my soul; how vile! how loathsome! that I may despise the beauty, and be dead to the pleasures, of the body, which so easily, so suddenly, so strangely, may be changed. For no glass is more brittle, no bubble more vanishing, no ice more dissolving, no flower more fading, no shadow less substantial, no sleep or dream more deceiving, no sound more transient, nothing more vain and more uncertain, than life, on which all other things in this world depend. "My days are as nothing," saith Job, though they lasted above two ages.

There is hardly any thing so frail and feeble, mutable and uncertain, but the Spirit of God, in Scripture, sets forth the vanity of life by; as if he would teach us by it, from the sight of every perish-

ing object which our eyes behold, to reflect on our own mortality. We sleep every night in the outer chambers of death; and, in some diseases, sleep, which is the image and picture of death, is taken away, to give place to the original, and make way for death. And every year, every week, every day, are we hastening to our final change; which may overtake us ere we are aware. Every day we lose some part of our lives; in our very growth, from infancy to manhood, our life decreases and grows less. Every pulse and breath tell us we are hastening to the end of time, and call upon us to despatch our work.

If we consider time to be the measure of motion, however, it may seem to have three stations; past, present, and future; the first and last of these are not: (one is not now, and the other is not yet.) That which you call present, is not now the same it was, before you began to call it so in this line; when you sound that word present, or the monosyllable now, the present and the now is past. we consider eternity into that time never entered, eternity is not an everlasting flux of time; but time is a short-parenthesis in a long period; and eternity had been the same as it is, though time had never been. If we consider not eternity, but perpetuity, which shall outlive time, and be when time shall be no more, what a minute is the life of man to that! How soon must it end!

Every word we speak, is formed of that breath whereby we live! and we may not live to pronounce another sentence, but the lamp of life may be extinguished and blown out by a sudden blast. Every thing we do carries away some sands of our little

glass of time; and how few may remain? or how soon may the glass be broken? Our souls are in our bodies, as a little air enclosed in a thin bubble; how easily is that broken, and where are we? How many who are now alive, in health and vigour, who deliberate on their meat and drink, and are curious of air and exercise, to maintain themselves in health, and please themselves with the dream of years to come, shall never see another new-year's day? It may be, not another month, or week, or morrow! Many have promised themselves great things on the morrow, but died before night: let me not say I shall not die this night, when I may this hour; and it is but once for all, there is no amending an ill death by another trial. "When I lie down to sleep, I hope to rise stronger and fresher, and fitter for work; but I know withal I may rise no more. And may not my name be on the roll of those who shall next be called, at least some time this year? Let me not then neglect or foolishly delay my principal business, to provide against a change which is inevitable, but the time of it altogether doubtful. Ought not my first and chiefest care to be employed to make my peace with God, (he alone can be my happiness; to his final judgment I am hastening; his favour alone can give me support and joy in a dying hour; to his mercy I must trust, when I leave this world, and can have no advantage more by any thing in it,) that he may mercifully receive my soul at death, and be my everlasting portion? Do I know my life is thus vain and transient, and shall I not seriously improve it to such a purpose? Shall these thoughts leave no impression upon me? Do

I breathe continually in this element of vanity, and yet forget where I am, and remain insensible of so near a change? Shall these thoughts pass away as a vanishing cloud, and distil no softening drops on my soul? Shall the image of death, which meets me every where, be only like an appearing ghost or phantasm, that startles and scares a little, but is presently gone, and no more considered! Oh! let me now remember to make God my friend, and secure an interest in his eternal mercy while the day lasts; yea, while my reason and understanding are free, and not disturbed and clouded by fear and pain, and the disorders of the body, as commonly they are in sickness, if God should vouchsafe me that warning; which yet I may not promise of myself to have, for I may be cut off by a sudden stroke before the end of this year I now begin."

And how great and necessary work have I to do in a short and so uncertain a portion of time! Endless joy or misery will be the consequence of spending this present time. My ignorant soul must be instructed, my carnal heart renewed, many false opinions must be unlearned, and sinful customs changed, and powerful lusts mortified, and strong temptations overcome, and many graces be obtained, exercised, strengthened, and preserved, to please, and serve, and glorify, a holy, omnipresent God, my sovereign; and express the thankfulness of my heart and life to Christ my Saviour; and is all this nothing? Is not all my little hasty time too little for such a work? to prepare for a safe and comfortable death, in order to a blessed eternity?

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SECTION IV.

Of the seeming difference between so many years past, and the same number of years to come.

WHEN I look back to the preceding years of my life, how easily can I grasp them all at once! they are even "as yesterday when it is past." But so many years to come have something great and vast, which fills my thoughts and affects my mind after another manner. Such is the difference between past enjoyments and the expectation of future. me suppose the same term and duration of years, and yet how different are my apprehensions of what is past, and what is yet to come! Things past, by remembrance of some remarkable passages when they happened, seem to be present with me; but, not knowing what may happen in the same number of years to come, I have nothing whereon to fix my thoughts. Or the reason of this difference may rather be, that men, in this degenerate and necessitous state, (with unsatisfied desires reaching after happiness, and sensible nothing present can afford it, and knowing by experience that nothing past could have done it,) are eagerly desirous of felicity; and, because we know not but what is to come may procure it, we hope it will; which makes the time seem long, by reason of our expectation and desire of good. Whereas the foresight of evil, and the expectation of that, some years hence, make the time rather seem short and near at hand: so many years to come, in the expectation and desire of good,

are long and tedious: such "hope deferred makes the heart sick;" even though it is of that sort which must needs baulk our expectations.

Prepare me, Lord! for what thine unerring counsel shall please to order, as to the remainder of my time on earth; and suffer me not to count upon a great number of years to come, since this, for ought I know, may be my last: neither let me expect rest and happiness in this world, which nothing temporal can afford. This is not the state, or season, wherein, by any promise of God, I am encouraged to hope for it. And if fifty or threescore years to come be thought so great a matter, and really be so, as to our stay on earth; oh! what apprehensions ought I to admit concerning an endless everlasting state! especially being as certain of the latter, after death, as I am uncertain about the former; whether so many years be yet to come before my death. Let me not hereafter be so preposterous in my solicitude, cares, and fears, as to be anxious for tomorrow, and yet be thoughtless of eternity.

SECTION V.

The little portion of our time on earth considered, by a computation of the life of man, from the number of years and hours.

THINK, O my soul! how short is that life at longest, made up of years, and months, and days; such little parts, and yet in number few. Well,

therefore, may it be expressed, as I find in Holy Writ, by "years of number;" that is, such as may soon be numbered. "When a few years are come," saith Job, (or the years of number, as in the original,) "I shall go the way whence I shall not return." By "the years of a hireling," which are not above three, we usually compute threescore and ten years to the life of man; let me suppose fourscore. The bed, with most, employs one half; and hardly one in thirty doth reach the age of seventy years. And. they who live to such an age do yet complain how soon it is gone. Ignorant childhood, and heedless youth, and infirm old age, may be supposed to take up a third part of that time. In either of them very little of the great ends of life are answered. ordinarily begin to reckon our lives from our birth; whereas, for a good while after, we know not whether we are alive or not, but are beholden to others to make the account for us. When we first come to the steady use of reason, or what we call the years of discretion, how few are there, but from the prejudices of education, from the corruption of human nature, from the want of experience, from the infection of bad company, how few, I say, but spend their younger years in those things which afterwards they are ashamed of when experience hath taught them the wisdom of men! How great a part of our remaining time is taken up in the necessities of nature, about food and raiment, and in lawful cares to support the body! And how much more than needs in pampering, dressing, and adorning it! Out of the small remainder, how much is employed in the concerns of a family and near relations, in particular

callings, in necessary civil business, and in getting, keeping, or improving an estate! besides all the time that is spent in recreations, visits, unprofitable discourse, impertinent thoughts, journeys, sickness, and innumerable other occasions, some allowable, some unavoidable, and many needless! After this, how little time remains wherein to cultivate and improve our minds, by languages, arts, and sciences, or the knowledge of a trade, &c. How little, then, after all, may we say is left for the matters of religion? for devotion to God, and serious preparation for another world?

Alas! how small a number of years make up the life of man! and how small a portion of that is employed about the principal business for which we were born, and for which we live? We divide time into past, present, and future: but the past is not now ours; the future is not yet, and the present now is past ere the sound be pronounced. And yet this is all the time allotted us wherein to secure the blessedness of eternity. How many hours more of our little time might be improved, than commonly are by the best? In every year there are 8766 hours: if we allow the greatest half for sleep and necessary attendance on the body, and take but 4000 hours for our work and business of consequence; how poor an account can most men give of all these 4000 hours in every year! Not one hour in seven, not one in ten, is ordinarily devoted to God and the purposes of religion. Should it not affect us seriously to consider this? especially if we remember at what an uncertainty we are, how small a number of days and hours does yet remain. This year, this month, this

week, this day, or hour, may be my last. What an unsuspected accident, or a sudden disease may do, I know not; but this I know, that there is scarcely any thing that hath not killed somebody; a hair, a feather, a vapour, a breath, hath done it; and when the Apostle James asks the question, "What is your life?" he answers, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away."

SECTION VI.

Of the redemption of time, how precious and valuable a treasure it is, and will be thought to be when it is too late.

Is the life of man so short and fleeting, our days on earth so few, and so uncertain! how careful should I be to manage every hour, endeavouring to match the swiftness of time by my celerity and diligence to improve it! I can have no business of greater or of equal moment to mind, than to secure the happiness of my soul in another world. And shall I lavish my time, and lose my pains about things unnecessary? What will all other business signify in the end, if this be neglected? Is there any interest more weighty that calleth me from such work? Is there any thing else that so well deserves my time, that may be put into the scales, or weighed in a balance against this? Shall eternity, which comprehends all time, have the least share of my time allotted for its concerns! How little a part of my time hath been hitherto employed in such work! How reasonable, how necessary, it is to redeem the little inch of time that yet remains, but hastens to a period! For, as there is no covenant to be made with death, so no agreement for the arrest and stay of time; it keeps its pace, whether I redeem and use it well or not.

The greatest part of our life is designedly employed to avoid death; we eat, and drink, and sleep, and labour, and rest, that we may not die; and yet even by these we hasten to death. Every breath, every pulse, every word, leaves one less of the number which God hath appointed me, and carries away some sands of the glass of time; and yet how little care is taken to employ it well! We seldom value it, till we can no longer use it to any advantage; and, though we know it can neither be retarded in its motion, or recalled when past, yet of nothing are we more prodigal. Yea, how many complain of it as a burthen, and know not what to do with their time, are exceedingly at a loss wherein to employ it, what to do to be rid of it! But, alas! how near is that change, when they shall think nothing too dear to purchase some few grains of that sand which now seem too many, while they are passing through their hour-glass! How sad will be the review of our lost and ill-spent time! How different an opinion of its value we shall have on a sick-bed, or when our time and hope are gone! How many weeks, and days, and hours, O my soul! have I trifled away in sloth and idleness, in foolish mirth and hurtful company, in vain thoughts and impertinent discourse, in excess of sleep and needless pastimes, feastings, inordinate care to adorn the body or gratify the sensual appetite! All that which is past is irrecoverable; and the little remainder flies apace. How quickly will it be gone! how soon, how suddenly, may an unexpected stroke of death conclude it! And yet this is all the opportunity I shall ever have to make my peace with God, and prepare for the everlasting world.

Did we consider as we ought, we should not foolishly throw away so much of it in trifles, and things impertinent, or what is worse. How much more might we redeem than commonly we do! to how much better purpose might we husband it! How much more work might we do, were we never idle, or did not loiter! We might walk far, did we not often stand still, or go out of our way. We. see it plainly by the great and excellent effects of some few men's industry in every age. Art hath found means to set spies and watches as it were on the sun, that he cannot look out but they take hold of his shadow, and force it to tell how far he is gone that day; and yet, while we are curious in making time give a just account of itself to us, how little do we consider the account of our time, which we must shortly give to God! Oh! that such a thought might effectually persuade me to redeem it! that I may not tarry till the end of time to know the worth of it! Let me not undervalue it, while it is given me to be used, that I may not eternally regret my folly when time shall be no more.

God calls me to diligence and labour; the work he calls me to is excellent, and the reward glorious; to know, and love, and serve, and obey him, in order

to eternal life! And shall I yet be idle? Is this the use and end of all my time? And do I know it, and believe it? Do I indeed believe it, and yet delay and loiter, and waste my precious hours in vanity? Am I going into eternity, and entering into another world, and know that I must be in heaven or hell for ever; and have I time to throw away? Am I fit to die, and to appear before my Judge, or am I not? Am I made meet for heaven, by pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace? Have I the earnest of the Spirit to witness and assure me of it? Is my interest in the promise of eternal life as firm, and my evidence of it as clear, as it may be made? Am I not conscious to myself, that much of this necessary work is yet to be done? And shall such an unprepared soul as mine be careless and indifferent how I spend my time?

SECTION VII.

Of the ordinances of heaven, day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest; their order and succession, established by God, are the effect of infinite wisdom and goodness. What they teach us.

WHEN I consider the beginning of another year, I can hardly avoid reflecting on its several parts, summer and winter, spring and fall, day and night, and their alternate turns. This calls me to observe and admire his eternal power and Godhead, wisdom

and truth, who is the great Author of this admirable variety; who hath fixed the earth with his foot, and hanged it on nothing, and settled the luminaries of heaven for excellent ends: "The sun to rule by day, and the moon by night;" thereby to distinguish times and seasons, to separate day and night, winter and summer, and consult the convenience of man and beast, by their due succession. "The day is thine, the night also is thine, thou makest summer and winter:" how wonderful is their order, beauty, and constant course; that, when the sun withdraws, and the shadows of the evening cover the earth with darkness, to conclude the day, the moon and stars supply the place of the absent sun during the night. And, that though they differ in length, yet gradually lessen, till they are both equal at the year's end, and have made the same circuit! How excellent a work of God is that quick succession to one another! The supposition of a perpetual night is a dismal gloomy thought. Oh, what will the everlasting darkness of the infernal prison be! The sun by day enlightens the earth, directs our motions, guides our way, governs our travel, assists conversation, awakens industry, warms the earth and air, gives life, and vigour, and fruitfulness, to all things under the sun, and makes the whole inferior creation to rejoice. An emblem of God's universal goodness, who is kind to all his creatures. admirable is its lustre! how glorious is its light! how loudly doth it proclaim his power and wisdom, who made this and the other lights of heaven, by his powerful word, and preserves them hitherto by his daily providence!

If God be now so glorious, contemplated in his works, considered in the lustre of the created sun, viewed only through the windows of sense, how much more glorious will he appear hereafter, when we shall see him face to face, and nothing interpose betwixt us and his incomparable light! If mine eyes dazzle to look upon the meridian sun, in what inaccessible light must he dwell who is the Father of lights! If this lower world, the common receptacle of his friends and enemies, have so much of his glory vouchsafed them by the heavenly bodies, Oh what a place will heaven be, where shall be no sun or moon, nor need of any, "but the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof!"

While I thus consider the sun and the day, I must not think the night is useless, which discovers another part of the heavens, not discernible by day, namely, the stars and planets, refreshing the earth, cooling the air, giving necessary rest to the creatures, &c. Their order, motions, aspects, oppositions, influences, are all useful and instructive. The agreeable mixture of light and darkness, the regular succession of day and night, within a few hours, are exceedingly wonderful and advantageous. In other parts of the world, where the sun-beams are more direct, and its heat excessive, God hath made amends by the length of the night, (under the equinoctial line it is always twelve hours,) and in the more northern parts, where the influence of the sun is weaker, the days are proportionably longer. So good is God to all his creatures, in all parts of the world! As the morning and evening answer

to the day of twenty-four hours, so do spring and autumn to the twelve months of the year, that we may not pass immediately from one extreme to another, but gradually be disposed for so great a change as is between summer and winter, and winter and summer. So merciful and gracious, and infinitely wise, is God in all his works! so that we cannot say one part of the year is more necessary than the other. The winter is as useful, for the good of the universe, as the summer. In this we are supplied with what is necessary to maintain us in that. And the admirable situation of the sun, seems much to contribute to it. If it had been at a farther distance from us, our earth would have been in a manner desolate; because the influence of the sun could not have been considerable. And, if it had been nearer, the planets would have wanted light, and this earth under been burnt up. The excellent order which it hath now obeyed for almost six thousand years is also wonderful. The sun never stood still but once, and that by a miracle; though much inferior to that of its daily progress. What a subject is here to admire the power, goodness, wisdom, and faithfulness, of God! Lord! what is man, for whom thou dost all this! And, because I find every year that the day dies into night, the summer into winter, and herbs and plants lose their beauty and verdure, and shed their blossoms; may I not hence learn to consider, and prepare for my own approaching change! In prosperity, health, and ease, and life, to expect, and make provision for, trouble, sickness, pain, and death, as every wise man in summer would do for

winter! and work with all my might, while it is called to-day, while the light continues; because the night of darkness is at hand, when none can work.

SECTION VIII.

Of evils to be expected in this year; the wisdom and mercy of God, in concealing from us the knowledge of future events.

Nor only few and uncertain, but evil likewise, are the days of the years of my life, may every one say, with the patriarch Jacob. A sufficient portion of evil for every year may well be expected, when our Lord tells us, there is a certain measure allotted for every day. "Sufficient to the day is the evil of it." Not only is our life short, but troublesome, full of vexatious mixtures. We cannot sing a requiem to our souls when one great calamity is past; for, we know not, in this region of changes, but another, a greater, may be at hand. One messenger of ill-news may succeed and out-do another, as it was with Job. We come weeping into the world, in a most helpless, forlorn, state; and, if we escape the dangers of infancy, and the casualties of childhood, and after that outlive the snares and follies of youth, we are tossed upon the pikes of time and chance, and sadden and disquiet ourselves with a thousand griefs and sorrows, by inevitable and unexpected occasions; though we increase the number of needless cares, and fears, and discontents; till, at length, a sudden stroke arrests us, we fetch a groan, and die!

We can give a catalogue of the afflictions and calamities, perplexities and disappointments, incumbrances, crosses, and evil accidents, of human life! By means whereof millions are disconsolate and sad, mourn and complain, weep and sigh, and from day to day, are "fed with the bread of affliction and the water of adversity." Not to mention men's fluctuating restless thoughts of heart, importunate desires, baffled projects, defeated purposes, which suppose or bring vexation. A good share of these is not to be avoided; and yet very few can be particularly foreseen. Who could prognosticate, a year ago, the mercies or the evils which have happened since, public and private, personal and relative, to the countries, cities, families, and persons, we are concerned for? And who can certainly foretel the events of this ensuing year? God hath intermixed good and evil in the life of man: he hath set "prosperity against adversity," saith Solomon, "to the end that man should find nothing after him;" that he may not know what shall come next, whether a prosperous or a calamitous event.

What a change may be made in a year by the mere casualty of human events; by the treachery of friends, or the malice of enemies, or the more immediate hand of God! We know not "what shall be on the morrow," much less what a twelve-month may produce. Because whatever may be disposed to happen, from natural causes, or civil councils, may be altered by a particular decree of providence. Prepare me, Lord! and every one of those in whose

felicity I more especially take part, for all the calamities and sorrows thine infinite wisdom shall think fit to exercise us with this following year: and, by thy merciful providence and gracious conduct, cause them to work for good: furnishing us with suitable strength and wisdom to acquiesce in thy good pleasure, and obey thy will. Let me follow thee, as the Father of the faithful, though I know not whither thou wilt lead me. Knowing the wisdom and faithfulness of my pilot, let me therein be satisfied, though I know not particularly what course he will steer!

I thank thee, O heavenly Father! that thou hast reserved the knowledge of future times and seasons to thyself, and hid events from men; lest, by considering them certain, we should presume in case they are good; or should despairingly afflict ourselves, by foreseeing the evil we know to be inevitable. we certainly foreknow the good that would befal us, we should not trust in thee to bring it to pass, or heartily implore thy care and conduct. Did we foresee the evils we should suffer, before they overtake us, we should be overwhelmed with diffidence and despair. Many a mother, who rejoiceth at the birth of a son, would mourn to foresee what a man, what a son, he will prove. Such an increase of knowledge would increase our sorrow; such a prescience would transport and discompose us by unseasonable joys and sorrows, born out of time; make us remiss in our duty to thee, and weaken our dependence on thine own unerring wisdom, truth, and power!

SECTION IX.

The supposition of dying this year should be improved: the consequence of redeeming time and providing for eternity farther pressed. The folly of elder persons is condemned and checked from the example of children. It is advisable to familiarise the thoughts of death, and to imagine beforehand what apprehensions of things we shall then have.

THE longest life is but a day multiplied; and who can certify, or assure me, which will be my last! He only, who was God as well as man, could say, " Mine hour is not yet come." Is all my life given me to resolve this question, " Whether I shall be in heaven or hell for ever!" And have I any time to lose and squander away as superfluous! Have I any more than need! It is no impossible or unreasonable supposition to make, that I may die this year. Let me admit that thought, and imagine myself on a bed of sickness, wearied with pain, and ready to leave this world; the physicians gone, despairing of my recovery; my friends about me weeping; and all things in a doleful melancholy posture, suited to such a state; feeling within myself the presages of death, expecting the final stroke in an hour or two more; what is then the value of sensual pleasure! Can I then relish or savour them! What then is honour to me, who shall never go abroad more to receive it, till carried to my grave! Will it then comfort me to have

lived in reputation and applause, if my heart was not humble under it, and the honour of God promoted by it? Can riches and a great estate support me when I am just packing up for a removal to the other world? In that hour, will it be any satisfaction to have made a stir and noise for a few years upon earth, to be talked of for a while longer than other men? Are these the things my dying thoughts will be most concerned to reflect on?

These dignities, pleasures, and possessions, offered to a dying man, would rather upbraid than tempt him; they come too late, as a prince's pardon to a man whose head is off. Die I must, and appear before my Judge, to answer for all that I have received and done in the body. Fool that I was, shall I then too justly say to myself, not to have considered this much sooner! not to have provided for it at a better rate! my sins stare me in the face, my conscience tells me I am not ready for such a trial: I have lived a stranger to such thoughts as now I cannot refuse, and which should have been admitted sooner. But, if to such a state any hope of mercy may be granted, though it be unspeakably little, yet I cannot promise myself any such warning by sickness. The sleeping virgins were called at midnight, and so may I. Where can I pitch my tents on earth, to be secure against a sudden removal!

Lord! make these thoughts effectual, to prevent my loss of precious time; which, at such a season, will be esteemed precious, though now it be not. O how swift, how short, is my time of trial, in order to eternity! how difficult, how important, a work it is to prepare for an everlasting state! What is all this world, how little, how mere a nothing, to a departing soul? And shall I, after such reflections, continue to pursue shadows, and please myself with empty dreams, when being so near my final judgment, the common wisdom of a man requires me to mind it in good earnest, and be more solicitous about it than for any thing temporal? Oh! in what manner will death open my eyes, by shutting the windows of sense! How shall I then see the nothingness of what is but temporal, and the reality of what is eternal!

We sometimes laugh to see the vanity of little children, who are greatly pleased with painted toys, and busily employed about trifles. It extorts a smile to see them eager and industrious, and mightily concerned in their childish sports; to see them sigh or weep for little things which we despise; to observe with what solicitude and care they will raise a little fabric, which three moments after they themselves pull down, or would otherwise tumble of its own accord. We laugh at these, but should weep over ourselves, as the greater and older fools, who are every whit as silly, yea, infinitely more; that, considering we know the frailty of our present life, and can look beyond the grave to another world, should yet mispend our precious time on things which cannot profit; and please ourselves with what is so unsuitable to our age and state; and suffer our passions to work with violence for a thing of nought; and our greatest diligence, care, and zeal, to be exercised on things importinent and vain; that are perishing in themselves, and can contribute nothing to our eternal welfare! And is it not thus with reference to all that men toil and labour for with the neglect of an immortal state?

The voluptuous Sadducee will not refuse the present gratification of his sensual appetite, because he is uncertain of another day. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Should not the same motive quicken my diligence in a better work? and, because my Lord may "come suddenly, as a thief in the night," I immediately prepare to meet him? Let me now, therefore, O my soul! look forward to the end of life and time! and so let me esteem, and seek, and choose, and do, everything, in the first place, which then I shall wish I had! Let me do nothing now which I verily believe I shall then be ashamed of or sorry to reflect on; that, by thinking what a condition I shall then wish to have my soul in, I may now provide myself much better than I have done hitherto. That, while I am in the greatest probability of living, I may suppose my change to be near, and so not dare to do any thing but what I would or might do, if I were in the persent expectation of death. To this end, let me go down to the potter's house, descend to the consideration of my mortality, and dwell among the tombs! remembering the Egyptians built themselves better tombs than houses, because they were to dwell longer in them. Let every night's repose serve me as a memorial of my last sleep! and let my bed stand for the model of my coffin! This is the only way to be dead to this world; to be able to judge of things now, as we shall do after death, according to immutable eternal-truth.

SECTION X.

The brevity of life considered as the fruit of sin. There are but three ways of leaving this world, as Abel, Adam, or Enoch. A diligent improvement of time further pressed, and the neglect of it bewailed.

The shortening of our days is the fruit of sin. All the funerals that have ever been in the world have been caused by sin. We die because we have sinned, and yet we should not sin as now, if this were not forgot, that we must die. From the first transgression of Adam we derive our death; and therefore some of his posterity lived longer than he. Which proves that the lengthening of our days is the peculiar gift of God; and yet it is such a gift as was more desired formerly than since the appearance of Christ: for we read of none in the New Testament, since "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel," who desired a long continuance here on earth.

Were we delivered from sin, the sting of death, by having made our peace with God by the blood of Jesus, death would not be frightful, or put on such a ghastly vizor, as to most it doth. But we are uncertain of our justification, we waver between hopes and fears, as to our final sentence; and are conscious to ourselves that we are not ready for our great account. This makes death so terrible; considering withal that it is inevitable; "the way of all the liv-

ing." For, though the curse be removed, and the sting be taken out by our blessed Saviour, so that the souls of believers are safe, and shall not be touched by the second death, yet God hath not taken away the stroke of it from the body. Though a Christian is assured of deliverance from hell, he is not exempted from the grave, as his passage to heaven.

Prepare me, Lord, by the free remission of all my sins, and make me meet for the blessed inheritance by thy sanctifying grace; and then thy time is best; "thy holy will be done." No matter, then, whether my death be violent, or that we call natural. It will be one of the two, for I cannot expect to be translated by a miraculous change, as holy Enoch was; and as they shall be, who shall be found alive in the world, when our glorious Judge shall come again. There are but those three ways of leaving earth; and the three first men, of whose departure we read in Scripture, are instances of all three. Abel of a violent death, Adam of a natural one, and Enoch of a translation. The variety and order of their departure, as one observes, are very admirable, and deserve to be considered. For all mankind must follow one or other of those three examples. Every man or woman, that is born into the world, must leave it by one of those three ways; either be cut off by a violent death, as Abel, the first man who died; or die a natural death, as Adam did, who was the second; or be translated, as Enoch, who was the third we read of.

But though I know, that within a few years, at farthest, I must leave this world by one or other of

these ways; though I have been dying ever since I began to live; and am dead to the last year, and to all the preceding portions of my time; and know withal, that what remains will quickly pass and be gone after the same manner; yet how have I overloved this body, as if I should never live out of it! and set my heart and affections on this world, as if I should never remove to another! and trifled away my precious time and life, as if a change would never come!

That few do so seriously admit such thoughts, is too evident by the general course and practice of For to what hazards do men expose their lives. themselves? what pains will they take? what inconveniences will they bear? with what unwearied industry will they toil and labour to get a little money or honour in this world, though they know not but they may be called out of it before the end of this year! And yet the same persons are remiss and slothful about a future life; negligent and unconcerned about an eternal state; careless and indifferent, yea, sottishly stupid, about the welfare of their immortal souls. Henceforward, O my soul! whatever others do, let me resolve to live in the expectation of a change, which I know is certain, and may be very near.

SECTION XI.

Of the expectation of another life. The vanity and misery of man in his best estate, if there be none. The satisfactory removal of that supposition, by the thoughts of God, and of eternal felicity, in his blessed presence.

LET me retire a little, O my soul! and bethink myself, what a world this is; what men design and seek, and do and suffer: with what false and feigned joys they are pleased, being only happy by comparison; and with what real sorrows they are afflicted; what innumerable disappointments, sicknesses, (and as troublesome remedies,) dangers, labours, pains, and calamities, of all sorts, multitudes groan under, and loudly complain of! And what little unworthy ends are pursued by all that do not seriously seek eternal rest! And how often frustrated! withal consider the cares that disquiet us, the errors that deceive us, the many temptations that assault and overcome us; how busy we are about vanities; how often dejected and melancholy for the breaking of a bubble; how eager and industrious to pursue a shadow; active and in earnest to destroy ourselves and one another; and then reflect on the malice and cruelty, the filthiness and impiety, and great corruption, which abound every where, whereby God is dishonoured, and provoked to anger! After this, what a theatre of tragedies must this world appear! what an hospital of sick and diseased, or rather distracted,

persons! How should I be tempted to say, "Lord! why hast thou made all men in vain?" In vain, indeed, if I could not look from this sea of troubles to the haven of rest; from this dark prison to the region of light; from this deceitful, troublesome, and defiling earth, to a blessed, everlasting heaven; for verily, if there be no world but this, "every man in his best estate," in this world, " is altogether vanity, Selah." It is a certain undoubted truth, the prefixed verily tells us so; and that it deserves to be well considered, we learn from the concluding "Selah, every man is vanity." Not the inferior parts of the creation only: but man, the lord of all; and every man, every Adam, from himself, to the last man that shall by ordinary generation descend from him. Not the ignorant, poor, or wicked, only, but all the individuals of this species. Young or old, strong or weak, beautiful or deformed, rich or poor, high or low, good or bad, (in respect of the body and this present life,) every one is vanity; and this is true, suppose him in his best estate, not only in helpless infancy and childhood, or in decrepit old age; not only in pain, and poverty, and disgrace; but in his most settled, most flourishing, most envied, and admired, condition upon earth; in the midst of strength, and wit, and honour; when at best, as to body, and mind, and outward circumstances; when he looks fairest; when he shines brightest; in the height of all his glory, with the greatest likelihood of a continuance; yet then he is but vanity. In his frame, in his temper; constitution, inclinations, actions, and employments; he is a mere shadow, an empty, mutable, inconsiderable

thing, and not to be accounted of. His heart, his head, his imagination, reasonings, desires, purposes, projects, hopes, and fears, are all vanity, and altogether vanity, in all the parts, and kinds, and particulars of it. He not only may be, but he is so, in his best estate; if this world be his best, if this be our all, and nothing more to be expected after death.

And how should such a reflection strike me to the heart, to suppose that after a few years are ended, I must return to my first nothing, and my very being be swallowed up of eternal death! What satisfaction can I then take in any present enjoyments, if an eternal annihilation be at hand, when I must bid adieu for ever to all that I now possess! What delight can I have in the ordinary comforts of life, with this belief, that within a year or two, it may be to-morrow, I shall sink into the dust, and exist no more! What pleasure in any thing with this dismal expectation! The more flourishing my condition is in this world, the more I should dread to lose it, if nothing better, nothing at all, can be enjoyed after death. Some philosophers have ignorantly urged such a consideration as an antidote against the fear of death; but the admission of it may rather deprive a man of all the comfort of life. What then is the advantage of a wise man above a fool? The exercise and improvement of our noblest faculties would render us more miserable than others, if nothing be expected, and certain, when this life is over. Not only sensual but intellectual pleasures would be disturbed and destroyed by such thoughts; that very shortly, the next year, or day, I must dis-

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appear; and all my enjoyments and hopes be utterly and for ever lost, with my very being.

Were the case thus, (which such consequences evince it is not,) it were better for most men they had never been born, whether their condition here be prosperous or afflicted. For, what comfort or quiet can any man have in plenty and prosperity, when this frightful apprehension of an approaching end is ever present? And what consolation can it yield a man, who is afflicted and calamitous, and yet loves his life above all things, to think that he shall not cease to be miserable, but by ceasing to be? And what is become of all religion, if such a thought be entertained? All devotion to God is thereby extinguished, all the restraints of vice removed, the flood-gates of impiety opened, the encouragements of virtue, the rewards of holiness, the foundation of tribulation, and suffering for righteousness' sake, all at once taken away. Lord! confirm my belief of the invisible future state of rewards and punishments! and let not infidelity damp my zeal in thy service, or rob me of the comforts of this life; which, if I have any solid ones, must suppose the hopes of a better.

Let others therefore, O my soul! who expect not an everlasting heaven beyond the grave, place their affections on earthly things, and mind this world as if there were no better, no other. Let them, who doubt or disbelieve the promised rewards of eternity, take up with what they must shortly leave, and labour for the bread that perisheth. But, since I profess to believe and seek the life everlasting, let me daily entertain myself with the

hopes of it, and let all the flattering dreams of what is desirable upon earth give place to nobler and better thoughts. Let me derive my principal joy from the promise and expectation of that future felicity, and endeavour nothing more than a meet-ness to partake of it. O my God, my God! thou art my life, and joy, and portion; in thee, and in thy love, all my desires and hopes are answered, and all my wants supplied. However evil this world is made by sin, yet thou art the infinite and supreme good. How mutable, how uncertain, how perishing soever, are all sublunary things, yet thou art the Rock of Ages, the fountain of everlasting life, and hast appointed another world, and another life, when this is ended, wherein thou wilt be better known, and loved, and served, and honoured, and communicate thyself more abundantly than now to those, the desire of whose souls is towards thee, that believe and love thee, that partake of thine image, and are devoted to thy fear. The assurance of this, and nothing else, will answer the objection of the present vanity and misery to which we are subject.

SECTION XII.

The consideration of the death of others, especially of relations, friends, and acquaintance, how to be improved. What instructions we may learn by the sight of a dead carcase, or a death's head, and the usual motto on it: and what by the death of holy persons, to quicken our desires to be as they.

HATH divine patience added one year more to the number of my days, when so many others were removed by death the last year? Others, whom a few months since I knew in vigorous health, wiser, stronger, more likely to live, and to answer the ends of life, than I; some of them my near relations and useful friends; in whose conversation I took delight, and promised myself advantage by their company and example; but they are taken, and I am left. Thy holy will, O Lord! is done! And they, who are prepared, are infinite gainers by this my loss. Quicken my preparations, by following their piety, to meet them in thy heavenly kingdom. Let thy long-suffering lead me to repentance; and suffer me not to slight thy warning, by the death of others, to expect my own. Lord! cure my earthly-mindedness and practical unbelief; and, by all such admonitions of thy providence, teach me to possess and use this world, as knowing I must shortly leave it; and let not the thoughts of my mortality wear off as soon as the funeral of my friends is over.

Every year some or other of our acquaintance drop into the grave, we attend them thither, and lament, it may be, for a few days, their departure and removal; but consider not that others will, ere it be long, do the same for us; it may be before this year be ended. Oh! how soon do we forget our deceased friends, and ourselves, who are likewise dying! and count upon a long life, which we cannot reasonably expect; and hug the enjoyments of this transitory world, as if our present state would last for ever! Will nothing but our own dissolution effectually convince us of our mistake and folly in this particular!

Though the arrows of death fly continually round about us; sometimes over our heads, when superiors are taken away; sometimes fall at our feet, when children, and servants, and inferiors, die; sometimes on our left hand, when an enemy is cut off; and, while I am pleased with that, in that very hour, it may be, another arrow on our right hand strikes the friend of our bosom and delight. And can we see all this, that great and small, high and low, friends and foes, are all vanity, and drop down dead round about us; and shall we not consider, that we are as vain as they, and must shortly follow! Shall we not, by a Christian chemistry, extract spirits out of these dead bones! and by these examples learn the end of all men, and lay it to heart!

Whenever I see the funeral of another, let me think thus with myself: why might not I have been that man or woman that is now carried to the grave? if we had been compared a few days since, it is probable I should have been thought as likely to have been his monitor, by dying first, as he mine. By such an improvement of these warnings, the request of the rich man to Abraham was in a great measure granted; for it is a call from the dead that speaks loudly to us, to consider ourselves, and prepare in time for so great a change; and say, as the prophet to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die."

Can we look upon a death's head and not remember what we shall shortly be! May not much be learned from its common motto! "I am that which thou shalt shortly be, and have been that which thou art now:" that is, I have been as gay and jocund, as brisk and merry, as proud and vain, as rich and great, as careless and secure, as honourable and as much esteemed, as beautiful and as well beloved, as witty and as learned, as thou art or canst be now. I valued myself as much upon my estate, and trade, and health, and beauty, upon my education, profession, employments, parts, friends, family, &c. as thou hast ever done, or canst do; I lived in ease and pleasure, in mirth and jollity; I minded the world as much, and indulged myself as much in sensuality, and was as careful of my body, pampered and pleased my flesh, as much as thou; and thought as little of a sudden death, and prepared as little for such a change, as thou dost: but now my dry bones are looked upon with contempt and scorn, but thou shalt shortly return to dust, and be as vile as I am.

It cannot but affect us, did we consider it, to see divers snatched away in their youth, and outward prosperity; and in the midst of their sin and folly,

without any visible signs of true repentance, or in terrible anguish and horror for their past crimes; and yet how few do take the warning, carefully to prevent the like unhappiness! O Lord, preserve those strong convictions, those serious thoughts, those holy resolutions, those lively apprehensions, of the life to come, of the evil of sin, and the terrors of thy wrath, which the sight of dying persons hath at any time awakened in my soul! O the eloquence of a dying sinner, to persuade to repentance! even when he hath lost his speech, and lies gasping, and trembling, on a bed of sickness; breathing out his last faint breath, and passing into the other world, to answer for the crimes and follies of a wicked life! Lord! revive those thoughts upon my soul, and let me feel the power and influence of them, in the hour of temptation, and in every time of need; and let the consideration of the death of believers, the blessedness they are thereby entered into, and the holiness they are possessed of, quicken my desires and diligence to prepare to follow. When I think where they are, and what they are doing; what is their work, and what their state; what their continual employment, and what their enjoyments, and how different from ours; I cannot but wish to be with them, to be as they are, and do as they do; to know, and love, and praise God as they. They are not hindered by such a clog as this body is to us; or tempted by their senses, appetite, and fancy, to sin against him; they complain not of a seducing flesh, unruly passions, low and disordered thoughts; of temporal afflictions, spiritual desertions, the snares of the world, and the malice and subtlety of the

devil; we, who are pilgrims and travellers, are exposed to these difficulties and storms, which they are freed from. They are now rejoicing in the light of God's countenance, and shall never question his love more, while we are in tears and sorrows, groaning to be delivered.

But think, O my soul! that they were lately such as we are now. They were members of the militant church, before they entered into joy and triumph. They had their conflicts and difficulties, their hour of temptations and time of trial, as we have ours. They were slandered, and persecuted, and saddened, and disappointed, as their followers are. They went to heaven the same way, and got the victory after the same manner, by repentance, and faith, and humble persevering obedience. They were once imperfect as we are now; and complained of the body of sin and death, and strugglings of unmortified lust, as we do; and were sometimes in the dark about their interest in the promise, and walked heavily under the hiding of God's face, and endured temptation, even as we. And as we have nothing to do, or suffer, but what they met with, we have the same encouragement that administered to their support; the same God and Saviour, the same way and rule, the same assistance, by the aids of his Holy Spirit, offered to us; the same promises, and the same rewards proposed which they enjoyed, first in faith and hope, and afterwards in fruition. Yea, they passed through the dark valley, and so must we; their earthly tabernacle was dissolved, and so must ours. We must expect to go the same way to rest and glory, and wait God's time for our admission. We must finish first the work which God hath for us to do and suffer, and then all tears shall be wiped from our eyes; we shall grieve no more, we shall sin no more, but be as the angels in heaven, or as the spirits of the just made perfect.

SECTION XIII.

What influence the consideration of eternity would have upon our hearts and lives, if soundly believed and considered. Especially, if the supposition of dying this year be annexed to it.

WITH what humility, mortification, and selfdenial, with what seriousness, watchfulness, and resolved constancy, would every Christian live on earth, did he act always under the influence and power of a confirmed faith, concerning the life to come! We should not then grudge at a little labour, or be frightened with a few difficulties in our way. What though I meet with injuries and affronts, hardships and inconveniences, being now in a foreign country, and every day I live, one day's journey nearer my eternal home! shall I not patiently bear momentary sorrows, while I believe I am hastening to eternal joys! Did I look more to the everlasting world, should not I make the pleasing of God, in order to my eternal welfare, the great business of my life! Should I not serve the Lord with more fervency of spirit, and be better fortified against the fears of man, who can but hurt and kill the body,

nor even that, without the permission of God! Should I not order all my affairs, answer all temptations, mortify inward lusts, live in the exercise of grace, and in circumspect persevering obedience, in order to it! Should I not watch more over my heart, and lips, and ways, be more diligent to trim my lamp, more crucified to this world, more careful to call myself frequently to an account, and renew my repentance! Would not my conversation be more useful and edifying, my discourses more savoury and full of religion, my prayers to God more humble and earnest, my charity to men more unfeigned and extensive, and my preparations every way more suitable to such a faith, and to such apprehensions of an everlasting state! Could we carry the thoughts of eternity about with us every day, and often admit them in our civil and secular affairs; did we repeat it frequently to ourselves, at least every morning, as soon as we are awake, that we are near eternity; this grain of incense would perfume the whole temple, and be an antidote against inward lust and impure thoughts, against the infection and defilement of bad company, and the snares of worldly business, and do much to prevent vain and sensual actions, and to cure vain affections.

Did we believe it, and believe it near, should we not take as much pains to secure eternal life, as we see men do to get riches! Should we not use the same diligence, care, and circumspection, the same prudent foresight, watchfulness, and perseverance, to prevent everlasting destruction, as others do to provide against poverty, and to live in plenty a little while on earth! Should we not rejoice as much

in the promise and hope of it, as others do in the prospect and expectation of some earthly advantage! Lord! I confess and bewail the weakness of my faith. How often have I concluded, and said, that heaven alone is the place of happiness, and yet my carnal heart is too much affected with earthly things! How often have I resolved, (upon the conviction of the certainty of the eternal world,) to mind this less, and to affect and see it no more as I have done! and yet my foolish heart is hankering after it still. O crucify my affections to things below! and let the believing thoughts of the next life render me victorious over all the temptations of this. Pardon and cure the staggering trembling thoughts of an unbelieving heart, by greater measures of a lively That my desires may be strong and urgent; and my diligence and steadfastness in the way of truth be some way correspondent to this important article; let me live only for eternity, hope for nothing but eternity, design and intend nothing as my chief end but eternity, and seek and mind nothing in comparison with eternity! Did we believe it, how would every thing in this world be looked upon as eligible, or fit to be refused, as it is like to be a help, or a hinderance, with reference to eternity! we should then endeavour to do nothing unbecoming such an expectation. Considering this world as our passage, and the invisible future world as our abiding country, where we are to dwell for ever; whatever we meet with here, whether sweet or bitter, easy or troublesome, pleasing or ungrateful, we should not much matter, but as it relates to hereafter.

And were I certain I should have no longer time

of trial, in order to this eternal state, than this one year, which is now begun; if a messenger from God should convincingly assure me of it; what would I not do to prepare for death, and secure the interest of eternity! With what remorse and deep repentance should I reflect on the follies of my past life! With what importunate cries should I beg forgiveness! How patiently should I bear calamity, for so short a time! How little should I value the favours or frowns of men! How circumspect to improve every season of doing and receiving good! How careful to avoid temptation, and how resolute in resisting it! Did I verily believe I had no longer time to live on earth than this one year at most! how insipid would be the offer of carnal mirth, vain pastime, sensual diversions, idle company, &c. How should I value every hour, every inch of my little time, under the apprehension that eternity is at hand! O my soul! shall I make no provision against the possibility of such a case! Is not my change as certain as if it were this year, as if it were to-morrow! though I am not certain it is so near, nor certain but it may be. Let me then "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Let me fix it well, and make it clear, that I have secured my great concern, and am ready for a sudden summons.

SECTION XIV.

How a good man may improve and encourage himself, under the supposition of dying this year, even in the most uneasy and undesirable circumstances.

I MAY die this year; then all my care and fears, if I am rich, all my sorrows and calamities (as to this world) if I am poor, will die too. I may die this year; then I shall have no more enemies, no more sickness, and, which is infinitely better, I shall sin no more. I must shortly die, it may be this year; but there is no other way to come to a blessed life, but by dying; and my Saviour hath, died for me, and he that believes in him shall never see death. He lives who was once dead, yea, he lives for evermore; he hath promised that I shall be with him to behold his glory. He hath the keys of death and hell; he is the resurrection and the life; he hath removed the sting of death; and I need not fear a conquered enemy. If I die this year, I must quit the company of all my dearest friends on earth, but I shall go to better company above; and, if they are the friends of Christ, we shall shortly meet again, and love one another in a better manner than now, and never more be parted.

I may die this year; my friends and enemies may die too. Let me enjoy the one as mortal dying persons, that must ere long leave me, or I them; and not fear the other, who may so soon perish, and

quickly be incapable of doing me or others mischief.

I may die this year. Let me not then think much of temporal sufferings, or of any evils which may so soon be over. Oh! what would condemned sinners in the other world give to be able to believe and say so of their sufferings!

I may die this year; and can I wonder that I am sometimes sick and in pain, and that my body is out of order! Am I not mortal, and dwell in a house of clay, which must shortly moulder into dust: and is it any thing strange, that such a crazy building doth sometimes shake, and need repair, and threaten a dissolution! It is a greater wonder I am any time well; that such a body, compounded of so many little parts, and so easily disordered by innumerable accidents, should be in health, is hardly less to be admired than that an instrument of a thousand strings should be kept in tune.

I thank thee, O heavenly Father! for the many advantages of sickness, to weaken the power of sin, to humble my pride, and cure my worldliness and sensuality, to reduce me from wandering, to empty me of self-conceit, to awaken the consideration of death and judgment, to impress the thoughts of the vanity of this world, and the eternity of the next; to assist me to mortify the flesh, to rule my passions, to exercise patience, and quicken me in prayer, and try my faith and love, and excite my diligence to redeem time, and convince me of the worth and uncertainty of it; and thereby promote my preparations for my final change. The great Apostle, by dying daily, had as many victories over this world as he

lived days. Oh! that I might so far walk by the same rule, as every day to think of providing for my last! and in health to do that which in sickness I shall wish I had done!

I may die this year; it may be by some tedious painful sickness, some troublesome and loathsome disease. But God hath promised his grace shall be sufficient; he will make my bed in my sickness, and put under me his everlasting arms for my support, and not suffer me to be tempted above what I am able to bear; he will increase my patience, and carry me through the pangs of death, and the dark valley; and, "when my heart and flesh fail, be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

I may die this year: what, if it should be by a hand of violence! If for righteousness' sake, in defence of the truth, for a good cause, and a good conscience, and my peace be made with God, and I am accused for doing well, or innocent of the evil which is laid to my charge, there is ground enough for encouragement and support. Thousands of my betters have met with the like, whose names are precious and renowned. Innumerable Christians have died by the sentence of a judge, with more cheerfulness and joy than others, or, it may be, than they themselves would have done, by the sentence of the physician. The torture of many diseases is unspeakably more formidable, as to the mere pain; and, for all else, the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness, will clear my integrity, if it may best subserve his own great and holy ends; at least, he will stand by and help me, when all forsake me: and if he speak peace, and give inward consolation,

who can speak trouble? And his final judgment, which is near at hand, will distribute rewards and punishments to all, according to their works.

Suppose, farther, that I should want a sepulchre after death. There is nothing I could better be without. If God receive my soul, and will raise my body at the last day, whether it putrefy and consume under ground, or above it, is no great matter. They who are alive will be more concerned in that than I shall be. Graves are for the sake of the living rather than the dead. The sun, the rain, the air, birds, beasts, and worms, will all contribute to give me burial, if men deny it. The only difference is, that it will be a little longer ere I am buried. my soul rest in the bosom of my Saviour, and, by persevering in the love and practice of the truth, I have secured my reputation with wise and good men, I need not be solicitous what becomes of my body. My Almighty Judge will raise me a glorious body, like his own, and re-unite it to my soul, as easily, and as certainly, as any of those whose bodies were preserved in caves and vaults, in proud sepulchres, and under stately monuments.

I may die this year; and shall not then have the satisfaction to see my children or nearest kindred educated and provided for, settled and disposed of. But is not the ever-living God the same? Cannot he as well take care of them when I am gone as now? answer all my prayers after my decease? and exercise that fatherly care, wisdom, and love, which shall dispose of their conditions? save them from temptations, and supply all their wants, and exceed all my desires, in reference to them? and fulfil his

covenant-promise from generation to generation, to the children's children of them that fear him? O how weak is my faith, that cannot trust in God in so common and plain a case!

Lastly, I may die this year; and not live to see the ruin of the anti-christian kingdom and interest, and the accomplishment of many excellent promises, which concern the rest, and peace, and purity, and glory, of the churches of Christ on earth, in the latter days. But have I not deserved, by my provoking unbelief, ingratitude, and disobedience, to die in the wilderness, and not behold the promised land, or see the peace of Jerusalem! And will not the strugglings of Satan, to support Babylon, infer a dismal night of darkness and distress before the expected morning of deliverance! So that it may now, if ever, be truly said, 66 Henceforth, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." And if God will take me to himself in the other world, I cannot possibly be a loser, though I should not see the beginnings of "a new heaven and a new earth," in this. However, I rejoice in hope, and pray incessantly for the resurrection of the witnesses, and the rebuilding of Sion, and the more plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit, (the great comprehensive promise of the latter times,) to effect a glorious kingdom for Christ on earth: and my faith assures me, I shall hereafter see the Son of God revealed from heaven, clothed with majesty, sitting on a cloud, leading the heavenly host, raising the dead by his powerful voice, summoning all the world to appear to judgment, gathering his elect, and finally destroying death, and him that had the power of it, the devil; condemning the wicked to everlasting destruction, but acquitting, honouring, and rewarding his poor members with infinite and eternal blessedness.

SECTION XV.

Of dying in a foreign country, and of dying young. Considerations proper to reconcile the mind to both.

I MAY not live to the end of this year: God, in his providence, having called me abroad, I may never see my native country more. Let me still remember, O my soul! that, wherever I am, I am travelling towards the grave, and passing to another world: that I may live in all places as a pilgrim and stranger here on earth; with affections suited to my condition, becoming one who is travelling in a strange land. Let me bear the inconveniences I may meet with in this world, as strangers in their travels are wont to do. Let me not repine at the ill accommodations of an inn, where I am to lodge but a night or two, but encourage myself with the assurance of better entertainment at home, when my pilgrimage is ended, and my journey over.

One of my dearest holy friends, and fellow-travellers, (whose memory will be ever precious * with those who knew him,) quickly arrived to his journey's end, and is entered into rest betimes. Which

^{*} Mr. Thomas Bent, who died at Geneva, May 10, 1683.

of his companions shall next follow, we know not, or how soon. Lord! make me apprehend the nearness of my change in every place; and, if I am prepared for dying, no matter where it be. There is no one country farther from the presence of God than another. The whole world may be considered as one great house, and the several kingdoms and countries of it but as different apartments in the same house; and they who tarry at home are no more exempt from death than they who travel abroad.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." I can go no where to be out of his territories; I shall still tread upon my Father's ground. I had rather be an Israelite in the wilderness, in the presence of God, than a courtier in idolatrous Egypt. Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God, was banished from his own country; and should I never set foot again on my native soil, there is no reason of murmuring against my God, who hath dealt thus with many of his favourites. And while I have been in a strange land, he hath not suffered me to feel the wants, and necessities, and heart of a stranger. Amongst a people of a strange language, he can and doth provide for me all things richly to enjoy. I may set up my Ebenezer; hitherto hath God supplied all my wants.

The presence of my gracious Father is every where the same; in some measure, blessed be my God, I have hitherto found it so. And may I not rejoice in God in a desert, though all the world should forsake me, though all the world should be against me? Should I have no other friend or helper, is not God, an infinite God, enough? and

without his favour and presence, what can all this world do for me? If I be sick, and in danger of death, among my relations and friends, if the comforts of the Almighty do not refresh and delight my soul, they cannot; and if I want not these in my last agonies, no matter in what part or corner of the earth I breathe my last. If the word and promise of God be my foundation, a holy hope my anchor, Christ my pilot, and heaven my country, I shall not fail of being landed there at last. Suffer me not to forsake thee, O heavenly Father! while I live; and do not thou forsake me in my last hour; and let it come when and where thou wilt. If my blessed Saviour will receive my departing soul at death, I am not solicitous in what country or part of the earth it be.

And that I may not be unwilling, in the flower of my age and time, in youth and strength, to leave this world; let me think often, that no one age or part of life is more privileged against the stroke of death than another. If I have done my work betimes, as my deceased fellow-traveller had, is it not better to receive the blessed recompense, than to tarry longer in a world of sin and suffering, absent from the Lord! Shall I not thereby escape a multitude of temptations, sins, and sorrows, which others by living long are exposed to! If my peace be made with God, what should make me willing to live at this distance from him! What should render this world so desirable, where God is so dishonoured, where I am so often tempted to displease him, and so often yield to such temptations! And may I not fear lest I should fall into such scandalous and grievous sins, that may bring a public reproach on the gospel of Christ, and sadden the hearts of all my acquaintance who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity! By dying early I shall contract less guilt, and commit less sin, and see and feel less sorrow, than others who live longer. And, though I should maintain my integrity, yet in this world my highest love and obedience to God, and my sweetest communion with him, is but imperfect. How many impediments and diversions do I daily meet with, that deaden my heart to heavenly contemplations and affections! what disappointments and sorrowful disasters, to convince me that this is not the place of rest and happiness! What smart afflictions may some of my relations prove! What dangerous snares may attend me in the remaining portion of my time! What opposition and hatred from men may the steadfast professing of the truth and fidelity to God expose me to! What public national calamities may I have my share of, &c.

But if I consider old age itself, which we do desire to reach, what and how many are the infirmities, and griefs, and troublesome circumstances, which attend that state, which dying young will prevent! Are not most men, who reach a very great old age, helpless objects of pity, a burthen to themselves and to all about them? And (which commonly happens) may I not then be as unwilling to die as at present? as loath then to leave the world as now, though in a manner it will have left me? For, how many old men, past the relish of sensual pleasures, are yet inordinately fond of longer life!

Have I not been told by heathers, as well as Christians, that it is not the length of time, but its improvement, that doth really make a long life? If I have answered the ends for which I was born, it is not too soon to die. No man ever miscarried as to his everlasting interest, because his life was short, but evil. He that is prepared for death, he that dies in the Lord, hath lived long enough, and should thank God for a speedy call to the possession of that felicity which the holiest saints on earth desire and breathe after. Gideon lost nothing by returning from victory while the sun was yet high. He hath fought long enough who hath gained the victory. If I have wrought but a few hours in a vineyard, and done but a little service for my Lord and Master; and yet am dismissed and rewarded before the rest of my fellow-labourers, shall I repine, and think my Lord doth not befriend me! If he hath any farther service for me, he will prolong my days and make me diligent, I hope, and contented; otherwise I pray he would make me ready to die, and make me willing and desirous to depart this life. For to be only content to die, that I may be perfectly holy, and fully blessed, is, methinks, too low for a Christian who acts like himself; believing the certainty of his avowed principles and hopes, and knowing, that, "while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord."

SECTION XVI.

The contemplation of our approaching change may assist us to mortify the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life; to cure ambition and promote contentment.

"ALL that is in the world," saith the Apostle, " is the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life." The dust and ashes of our own mortality, duly considered and applied, will help to deaden and extinguish each of these. By the pride of life, we lift up ourselves against heaven, and despise our Maker. By the lust of the flesh, we over-love and indulge the body, and study to gratify the sensual appetite. By the lust of the eyes, our desires are immoderate after temporal and external goods. The thought of our approaching end hath a tendency to oppose and mortify these lusts; to humble us before God; to take us off from the inordinate love of the body; and to moderate our passions to earthly things. It may help us against pride, by showing us the infinite distance between the eternal self-sufficient God, and such poor dust as we, who are but of yesterday; and, if he uphold us not, and maintain our souls in life, shall be laid in the dust to-morrow. It will remind us of his justice against sin, the parent of death, and of all the miseries of our mortal state; and convince us of our weakness to resist his will, to avoid his wrath. As to our fond affection to the body, it

may instruct us, that it deserves not to be so much accounted of; it will open our eyes to discern the preference of our immortal souls, and what concerns them, to the interest of a perishing body. It may convince us that we are cruel and unkind to our very bodies by over-loving them, because we thereby contribute to their eternal sufferings; and so teach us to love and use our bodies as servants to our souls in this world, and expecting to share in glory with them after the resurrection. It may also help to moderate our desires after earthly goods, and so cure the lust of the eyes, by letting us see the vanity, uncertainty, and short duration, of these things, and their insufficiency to make us happy and give us true content.

The thoughts of an approaching change may, if any thing will do it, damp the mirth of the luxurious epicure, and strike him into a fit of trembling, as the handwriting on the wall did Belshazzar. It may discover the distraction of living in pleasure, and of care to please the senses, and the fleshly appetite, when the end is so near. It may likewise check the folly of ambitious designs; that men should make so much ado to get into slippery places, and whence they may so easily fall. Where, being puffed up with vain applause, they forget themselves and their latter end, till their life and glory expire together. Where are now the great, and mighty, and honourable, who have made such a noise in the world? What is now the difference between the dust of an Alexander or Cesar, and that of their meanest slaves or captives? Could their dignities and earthly glory preserve any of them from the stroke of death,

or the judgment of God? or, without repentance, from his condemning sentence?

Think, O my soul! how little will it shortly signify, whether I have been known and honoured among men or not, any farther than God may be glorified by it. How should it suppress vainglory, to think of being one day esteemed and worshipped, reverenced and applauded, by dying men, and laid in the grave the next! Let me rather seek that glory and honour to which immortality is annexed; and labour to be accepted with God, at whose bar I must be judged, endeavouring to keep the testimony of a good conscience; and then it is no matter whether I pass through good report or evil report: no contempt, or frowns, or threatenings, of men need then discourage me. Though I should be trampled on by the foot of pride, while others are happily in a dream for a little while, and, it may be, have a prosperous passage to damnation; I will rather thank God for delivering me from their temptations, and giving me the opportunity and call to hasten my preparations for a better world.

Let God dispose of my condition here, and reputation too, as best shall please his sovereign will; only be pleased to keep me upright, and to preserve me from everlasting shame and confusion of face, after the general resurrection and final judgment. Vouchsafe me a portion now in thy approving love, and own me for thine at last, in the great and terrible day of reckoning; that then I may hear the blessed welcome, and enter into the joy of my Lord.

E

SECTION XVII.

The same argument considered farther, as dissuasive from worldliness and earthly-mindedness; and as proper to confute the vanity of long projects and great designs for this world.

ARE the years of my life but few, and they hastening to a period? and may this be my last? Let me not then greedily covet riches and abundance, and waste my little time to scrape together large provisions for many years to come, when I have no assurance to see the end of this. Is it becoming such a belief to toil from day to day, that I may lay up that which I must so soon leave? as if I were to spend an eternity here on earth, and in the mean while neglect the one thing necessary. Am I not upon the shore of eternity? May not the next tide carry me off? And shall I spend my whole life in diversions from the main business of it? Have I nothing else to do but to gather shells, (if they were pearls, the absurdity were still the same,) and pile them up in heaps, till I am snatched away past all recovery? Shall I be regardless of an eternal state, and run the hazard of being undone for ever, by solicitous care about pretended necessaries for a long abode on earth, (much less for superfluities,) when I am not certain of the possession this one year? Shall I magnify and admire what is so soon to be parted with? Value myself upon these things, so as to despise those that have less, and envy such as

have more! and suffer my mind to be distempered, and my passions immoderate, on every change of these things!

Though I know, besides my own mortality, that, to enforce the argument, there is a principle of corruption in all these things; that our very manna here, in a little while, will stink; and bread, which is the staff of life, moulder; our richest garments wax old and rot; silver and gold rust; and the greatest beauty wither; and every thing that is earthly decay and perish: and shall not this teach me to sit loose from all such things? Can I imagine, that in my last hour it will be easier to part with much than little? Or better, in the day of judgment, to have a great estate to answer for than a less one?

We read, concerning the patriarch Abraham, (who rightly understood the transitory nature of riches and his own mutable condition,) that the only purchase he made with his riches was a grave; choosing to take possession of the land promised him, rather by a mark of his parting with it, than of his possessing it. Did I think oftener and more seriously, O my soul! of tarrying here but a little while, I should more easily be persuaded that a little of this world were sufficient to carry me through it. I should consider more that my heaven-born soul is made and designed for another and endless world: and, therefore, should not so far "forget his own people, and Father's house," as eagerly to pursue and seek what is suited only to the body for a little while; and whereof a little, with contentment, will be sufficient.

The same reflection may be used to contract our

thoughts to present duty; that we may not perplex our minds with long designs and projects; which, if we die this year, will come to nothing. Our great business, in this world, is adapted to the little portion of time which is allowed us. Not that good designs, for the public benefit, may not be begun by one and finished by others; or that we are not obliged prudently to provide for those who shall come after us, by attempting many things of probable advantage to posterity. But, considering the shortness and uncertainty of life, not only should the most necessary things be first minded, and not put off by prosecuting such designs as may signify somewhat to others, when we are dead; but we should not now omit that which we may hope to compass ourselves; to begin such things, whose accomplishment must depend on the pleasure of our successors. eration and faithful counsel would, in this case, have prevented the fruitless expense of many men's time and money, which, if otherwise employed, might have turned to good account to themselves and others.

And this heightens our folly, that, while we pursue great projects in reference to this world, and die without effecting them, our preparations for eternity are neglected; and so we are suddenly cut off in the midst of our folly, and "all our thoughts perish." How easily, how soon, may they do so! The difference and distance between death and life being no more than that of a lighted candle from its being blown out; and, if it be exposed to all winds, how quickly may that happen!

SECTION XVIII.

The consideration of the certain near approach of an everlasting state amplified, and pressed, to enforce a holy life.

In this world we begin a year and quickly come to the end of it; and, ere long, the little number of our years and days will be expired. But, when death conveys us into the world of spirits, the day of eternity shall never be closed with an evening. Of how fearful consequence is that death by which an eternity must be decided! What attention, what seriousness, what diligence, what care, does the decision of so important a matter call for! ETERNAL! What will be the next word, O my soul! How much am I concerned to know it! Will it be blessedness or misery? will it be life or death? This one word is the joy of angels and the horror of devils; the unspeakable delight of blessed saints, and the confusion and despair of condemned sinners.

At the creation of the world, time got the start of us, and was five days older than we: but our immortal souls shall endure beyond the utmost limits of time, and last as long as the everlasting Father of spirits, of whose duration there is no end. Shall I then exist and live, though my body perish and see corruption? Shall my soul, myself, exist beyond the grave, in felicity or misery, and that for ever, and according to my present actions? What am I then most concerned to mind? What am I to choose? What am I most to fear, to wish, to do?

What is a shadow of honour and reputation among dying men? What are a few drops of fleshly pleasure, for a moment, to eternal rivers of pleasure at God's right hand? What are the sufferings of an hour or two to the pains and anguish of eternity? What can the world, flesh, or devil, give me comparable to eternal life? What can I suffer in the way of holiness, that may be set in the balance against an everlasting hell? And yet how often, O my soul! how boldly, how unconcernedly, how foolishly, do I hazard the one and forfeit the other for the sins and vanities of this world! whereas one prospect of eternity should make every thing that is temporal appear little in my eyes: the highest elevations of earthly greatness, abundance of riches, the great affairs, business, and employments of the world, pomp and splendour, reputation, and all that now flatter the senses and the vanity of mankind.

Oh! that I could but live, as believing and expecting an eternal state! As having it in my eye, managing all my affairs with a visible reference to it; discovering to all the world, by my behaviour and deportment, that I do in earnest believe it certain; for, be it ever so certain, if I do not apprehend and consider it as such, it will no more affect me than a fable. Neither is it enough to consider it as certain, but as near: for the most weighty, the most terrible things apprehended as at a great distance, will little move. Thinking of the long interval between the advantage of being exempted from such evils, for so long a time, will please me more than such distant calamities will affright.

Let me therefore endeavour to impress the con-

sideration of eternity, as at hand, more deeply on my heart, that I may walk and live, discourse and pray, and demean myself in every thing, as near an unchangeable state. Am I not convinced that this is certain, from the nature and operations of my soul, from the reflections of conscience, from the righteousness of God in his government of the world, from the present unequal distributions of good and evil by his providence, and from the plain and equal assertions of his revealed will? I have nothing to object, nothing to reply; but I find a necessity of inculcating and urging the consideration of it in order to its influence. I find it needful to reflect often how near I am to such an endless state; that in one instant, by death, I enter upon it: and that this instant may be as near me as my next thought. That the Holy Scripture describes the two contrary conditions after death, (and every man and woman in the world shall share in one of them,) as both everlasting: the one, by eternal life, eternal glory, an incorruptible crown, that fadeth not away, an incorruptible inheritance, a house eternal in the heavens, &c. the other, by unquenchable fire, a prison where none escapes, eternal damnation, everlasting burning, everlasting punishment, everlasting destruction, a worm that never dies, wrath that is ever to come, blackness of darkness for ever and ever, &c.

Think, O my soul! that in one of these two contrary states I must abide for ever; in endless joy or sorrow: blessed in the presence of God, or for ever banished from it. And, whoever thou art that readest this, apply it seriously to thyself, it is thine own case. Yea, I tell thee from God, that holiness of

heart and life is absolutely necessary to the former, and that without it thou shalt never see his face, but be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of his glory.

Is this an unquestionable truth? Olet me consider it till I feel the power and efficacy of so important a principle! Let the impression be deep and lasting! Let it pierce and enter into my very soul! to cool the heats of lust, to quench sensual and earthly desires, and to mortify all inordinate affections to this world; and fix my resolutions to mind and seek eternal life with all my heart!

These are not difficult and perplexed niceties, which wise and holy men differ and disagree about. They are not metaphysical subtilties, which few can understand, but the express word of God, and the daily dictates of my own reason and conscience, which all Christians, and almost all men in their wits, (except in an hour of great temptation,) confess and own; or, whether they will or not, are forced to expect and fear, if they are not in a condition to consider them with a joyful hope.

Lord! cure the unbelieving doubts concerning these great things, which, notwithstanding the plainest evidence, the devil may, at any time, suggest! Let a confirmed faith be the reality of what is thus future; that my soul may be influenced by them, as it is wont to be by things present! Let it be the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen," and as yet at a distance; as if the day of judgment were already come, and there were no intermediate time to pass between this and that.

O eternity! eternity! the more I consider it, the

more unfathomable still I find it. Unchangeable blessedness, or remediless, endless torments! an eternal blissful day, or everlasting horror, darkness, and despair! life or death, glory or destruction, to last as long as the immutable, living God! None of the patriarchs, who lived longest, arrived to the period of a thousand years; which, in comparison of God's everlastingness, is set forth but as one day. But, strictly considered, millions of years and ages have no proportion with it; because no multiplication of them will amount to eternity. Whereas, one hour hath some proportion to a hundred thousand years, because a certain number of hours will amount to so many years. But no number of years or ages, ever so often multiplied, will make up eternity: as no subtraction of millions of years will lessen it, an entire eternity will be still to come, and will ever be to come. When innumerable myriads of years are past, eternity shall then seem but to begin; because, when as many more are over, it shall be as far from an end.

Oh! that the thoughts of eternity may be powerful and prevailing above all others! that I may judge of every thing by its relation to it, by its influence upon it! Choose now, O my soul! whether everlasting joys or miseries shall be thy portion: but consider well, that thine eternity is concerned in thy present choice; and that this choice must be pursued with steadfastness and constancy as long as I live: and what are a few years to prepare for an eternal state? Were we obliged to spend several hundred years in serious humble preparation for it, with the greatest strictness and severity of life during

all that time, it were infinitely less than to spend an hour or two in preparing for the greatest dignity and employ on earth, which can be enjoyed but for a few years at longest. For to these an hour hath some proportion; but a hundred or thousand years have none with an everlasting duration. Therefore, to consider how many years of toil, and pains, and diligence, many bestow on the probable prospect of some temporal good, should reprove and shame my negligence and remissness, in providing for eternity.

SECTION XIX.

The punishments of the damned considered as intolerable and everlasting, and as unquestionably certain. What the reflections upon hell-torments may and ought to teach us.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," the entrance into the way of life, as it is ordinarily one of the first means to awaken the soul to a serious concern for eternity: let me, therefore, first consider the endless punishment of the wicked in the other world, before I enter upon the ravishing prospect of the blessedness of heaven, promised to the righteous. And with what serious trembling should I think of the terrors of an "everlasting destruction, which our Lord shall be revealed from heaven to render, to all who know not God, and obey not the gospel." When "the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; as the righteous into life eternal."

The dreadfulness of that punishment, the endless duration of it, joined to the consideration of its unquestionable certainty, deserves the most attentive thoughts of every man who loves his soul, and would manifest he doth so, by securing his greatest interest.

The description of that misery, under unsupportable and eternal torments, demands more than a transient view; because no words can sufficiently express the horror of that state. What is it, O my soul! to be banished from the blessed sight and presence of God for ever, and all the impressions of his holy image and likeness? and to know that this is the fruit of my own choice; that I lost it by my own fault and folly; that I deserved to lose it; that the sentence is as just as it is irrevocable! Who can fully imagine the dismal despair of a condemned sinner under this anguish of a guilty, self-accusing mind! while under the stroke of God's almighty revenging justice, with a distincter view and knowledge than now of God and his excellencies; of himself and his own vileness and malignity; which must greatly increase his rage and torment. Add to this, his being enraged by the accusations and cries of wicked acquaintances and relations, and his being mocked and insulted over, and tortured, by malicious damned spirits; with a clear understanding of that glorious felicity he despised, refused, and forfeited; with a deep sense of his former madness in preferring the sinful pleasures and advantages of this world; and this after many warnings, and invitations, and calls, from God, to have prevented it; and never to be diverted one moment from the consideration, sense, and feeling, of his misery, and the duration of it; to have all his passions let loose with the greatest violence, and nothing to satisfy them; and continually to preserve a hell of wickedness and horror in himself; and to endure the reproaches, convictions, regrets, and stinging reflections, of conscience, "the gnawing worm which shall never die." Who can conceive the unspeakable misery of such an accursed state! So great a calamity, and yet everlasting!

How long doth one day or night now seem to a man under some violent racking pain, in any one part of his body, though he be under the means for cure, and have his friends about him to pity, comfort, and assist him, with the hopes of ease in a little while, and the certain knowledge that it cannot last long? Oh! what then will be the dismal state of tormented sinners in hell! how infinitely must it exceed the most terrible idea we can now frame of it! to languish out a long eternity, in that gulf of darkness and despair, under unpitied, intolerable torments, without intermission or hope of end! miseries without measure! judgment without mercy! pains and sorrows intense, and yet endless! without the least succour or relief, relaxation or remedy, diminution or change! without a drop of comfort, without a moment's rest, without the smallest beam of light, or the least glimmering of hope! perpetually dying, and never dead! under unsufferable wrath, which yet will be for ever "wrath to come!" seeking death, and never able to find it, but eternally to endure all that calamity which the conjunction of death and life together can render dreadful!

What groans and cries will these thoughts and these sufferings wring from their hearts! but no refuge will then be found, no excuses admitted, no prayers, no entreaties, will then prevail, no tears move to pity. "He that made them will show them no mercy, and he that formed them will show them no favour." It is never, never; that is the killing word, that breaks the hearts of those hopeless prisoners in the place of torment. When once delivered over to that prison of God's wrath, they shall no longer be "prisoners of hope." Judgment shall be brought forth unto final victory, and the redemption of the soul shall cease for ever.

The vain hopes of sinners shall then be ended in eternal desperation; hell will be full of those who did once hope they should never come there, and full of those who despair of deliverance from thence; but shall suffer exquisite pains that cannot be numbered, or measured, or endured: but that every minute of an hour will seem a whole year, and yet must eternally be endured by miserable sinners, who will not be wise in time to prevent such an intolerable portion. Let me therefore, O my soul, descend into hell, by meditation, whilst I live, that I may not descend thither when I die, and be shut up for ever in that prison, the place of endless torment.

Might we but suppose, that one of those miserable souls did let fall but one tear, in a hundred thousand years: and if, after he had by these means wept so much as that his tears would equal the drops of water in the whole sea, his misery should have an end; this were hope, this were comfort. But, alas! after that period, his misery will be as far from an

end as when he first began to feel it. It will then be but "the beginnings of sorrows," which will never, never, never, end!

Think, O my soul! that this is the portion of the sinner's cup; this is the wages of sin; and the certain doom of final impenitence and unbelief. It is no politic cheat or melancholy dream, but the express repeated word of God and Christ, the holy prophets and apostles, and the voice of reason too. Supposing but the immortality of the soul, and the power of self-reflection, the punishment of sinners must needs be everlasting, as carrying continually a hell within them, unless God work a miracle to prevent it, which there is no ground to imagine he will, or shadow of reason why he should. God hath pledged his truth and his eternity to execute this sentence of his threatened wrath. He is a God of infinite mercy, it is true; but he hath told us how far his mercy shall extend. He will not exercise one attribute to the dishonour and the disparagement of the rest. That obstinate and impenitent sinners shall thus perish, is not because the goodness and mercy of God are not infinite, but because his other perfections are so; namely, his holiness, justice, truth, sovereignty, and wisdom. Was it wisdom and goodness to annex such a penalty to the violation of his law; and can it be inconsistent with them to inflict his threatened wrath?

Shall we suppose God to uphold his dominion and government by a falsehood? to keep the world in awe by the menaces of such punishments as shall no where, never, be executed! Is it unlikely that God should exercise so much severity? And is it not

as improbable that his repeated word and oath should prove false? Is it not a righteous thing with God, as the governor of the world, thus to punish the obstinate despisers of his grace? who slighted his authority, disobeyed his law, affronted his sovereignty, derided his power, denied his truth, contradicted his holiness, and joined issue with the devil to pull him from his throne; who abused his patience and long-suffering, and scorned all his threatenings; who thrust away their own happiness, and would not take warning; who burst all his bonds asunder, and broke through all obstructions; and would not be stopped in their course of vanity and folly, or so much as consider their danger: who rejected his call to repentance, and refused his mercy when it was offered; and preferred a lust before his favour, and the pleasures and profits of this world before the heavenly glory; and, notwithstanding all the methods of his grace, and the checks of his providence, and of their own conscience, they will go on, they will die!

Let me, O my soul! adore the sovereign justice of God in all his judgments, and tremble at the threatenings of that eternal wrath, which so few consider or believe till it is too late. Let the foresight and the fear of such an intolerable, endless punishment, be the means to save me from it! Let me herein read the evil of sin, and learn to abhor and avoid it. Let me pity, and warn, and counsel, and pray for, those of my relations or acquaintance, who live in sin, and run the hazard of this eternal ruin. Let me not envy the foolish mirth and momentary prosperity of the wicked, whose present joy must ere

long expire, and an everlasting destruction succeed in its room. "How short is the joy of the hypocrite! and the triumph of the wicked is but for a moment." Let me fear and dread every thing that leads to this dismal issue, and improve every thing that may help me to escape it. And, by consequence, let me less value all the good and evil of this present life; judge of all things by this light; be patient under temporal calamities, and thank God that this is not hell; and thank him more, that present sufferings do help to save me from eternal ones.

Whatever I can suffer in this world, let my condition be ever so dark, and sad, and afflicted, it is not, it cannot be, such, but that every one of the damned would think it an infinite happiness to exchange with me, and be as I am. Let me think of those exquisite and eternal flames, to cure my impatience under the sharpest trials and afflictions I may now suffer.

Did I believingly consider an everlasting hell, I should not think much of any thing that is required to prevent it. The severest exercises of religion, the strictest temperance, the nicest chastity, the largest charity, the greatest self-denial, all the hardships of repentance and mortification, and continuance therein to the death, though for many years more than I am like to live, would be reckoned easy, as well as just, if set in the balance against the eternal miseries of the damned.

What will not men do and suffer, to prevent a temporal death? They will endure a painful course of physic; tear out their very bowels by purges and vomits; and are content to be cut and sacrificed;

and to suffer any thing almost to save their lives; but how little will they do to be saved from the wrath to come! One would think they should have no rest, or peace, or be able to live a quiet hour, till they have made some provision against the hazard of this eternal destruction; and look upon all men as their friends or enemies, according to the help or hinderances they received from them, in reference to it. But the direct contrary is every where apparent. Men are careless and secure, jovial and merry, in the way that leads to hell; and esteem, and love, and choose, that company that will help to bring them to this place of torment: yea, such is their stupidity and strange perverseness, that they will not suffer to be told of their danger. If you tell them, that, by such a course, or such an action, they will lose so much money, or their lives will be in danger; they reckon it an obligation, will take it kindly, and return you thanks: but when they are told, by such courses and actions they will lose their souls, and the favour of God, and the hopes of heaven, and must perish for ever, this they will not receive, they despise the message, and scorn and hate the messenger; are displeased and angry at such faithfulness.

"O bless the Lord, O my soul!" for any good hope, through grace, of escaping this intolerable and endless misery. "And let all that is within me bless his holy name." I have deserved the same endless and unsupportable wrath, which thousands are now under, and shall be under to all eternity; but he did not suffer me to fall into it. To be delivered out of those torments, after many years'

misery, would be thought an admirable, unspeakable kindness; and is it not a greater favour never to be thrown into hell, which I have so often deserved? How grateful would a damned person be to be freed from those flames, and placed in the same condition I now am in! What a life of serious, self-denying obedience would he lead! And hath not God done more for me? Am I not more indebted to his goodness? He hath kept me out of hell, and offers me the heavenly glory upon reasonable, honourable, and easy terms. Blessed be God, I may yet escape the wrath to come!

Let me heartily compassionate the delusion of those multitudes of deceived, perishing souls, whose eyes are blinded by the god of this world; who will not believe it, till they are convinced by the light of that fire which shall never be extinguished. Yea, when I read or hear of ten or twenty thousand men slain in war, (whether of infidels or Christians,) let me think of it with other apprehensions than formerly I was wont to do. Considering that many, it may be the most of these, shall never have any comfort or mercy more; fearing lest the same sword or bullet that gave them a mortal wound, hath fixed them under God's everlasting wrath; and that by dying they are undone for ever.

In very many other cases, the faith of this article would rectify my opinion, and direct my actions, if seriously considered and improved. This would make me think of death under another notion than it is commonly considered. For, without the consideration of hell annexed to it, it is not so very formidable, but that heathers have been able to despise

it. The most contrary sects among them, on different grounds, have been able to do it; but, consider death as a passage to eternal misery, as the gate of hell, as the end of all comfort, to a wicked man, and the beginning of an endless calamity, and nothing can be imagined more dreadful to a guilty, unholy soul. Some of my acquaintance, it may be, who died this last year, are now among those hopeless, despairing, wretches, who expect the final judgment of God to consummate their insupportable mis. ery. If they were permitted to come and tell us what they suffer, and what they know, what a terrible consuming fire God is; what vanity, lust, and folly, brought them to this place of torment; what diligence they would advise us to, while in a state of hope, to prevent the like; if we have any love and kindness for ourselves, any bowels of compassion to our own souls; what a change do we think it would work upon us! But, "if we will not hear Moses and the prophets," Christ and his apostles, "neither should we believe, though one came from the dead."

SECTION XX.

The eternal blessedness of heaven considered, as the perfection of holiness, to quicken our desires and endeavours after greater meetness to possess it.

DOTH one year after another hasten me to the end of time? And doth the blessedness of eternity depend on the communications I now receive from

God? On the preparations I now make, and the meetness I can now attain, for eternal felicity in the presence of my God and Saviour? O, with what intenseness of mind should I now prosecute that glorious object! with what unwearied diligence should I run the race that is set before me, lest I fall short of the incorruptible crown of life! How should every thing be undervalued and rejected, that would divert, retard, or hinder, me from pursuing this end! Lord, be not a stranger to my soul, in this distant wilderness state! let me see more of thy light! be transformed more into thine image! experience more of thy love! feel more of thy vital presence and quickening Spirit! let the divine life in my soul be more powerful, and the characters of thy likeness be more legibly stamped upon it! by the daily exercise of faith, and hope, and holy affections, carry me through this world till my pilgrim state be over, and thou hast brought me to perfect everlasting holiness! and let the believing forethoughts of it fill all the powers of my soul with joy and wonder, desire and love!

Give me, Lord! to think aright of the heavenly glory, as a confirmed state of positive perfect holiness; of heavenly light, love, liberty, and joy, with the satisfying vision of God in the face of Christ, and his impressed likeness; dwelling for ever in the direct and steady view of his transforming glory, with complete conformity of the soul to eternal goodness, truth, and love, as its perfection; esteeming nothing, desiring nothing, but that God and Christ may be glorified, with an entire subjection to his will, adherence to him, rest and confidence in him, swallowed up in the love, admiration, and praise, of God and

our Lord Jesus, living in joyful repeated acts of subjection, adoration, and acknowledged dependence; ravished to behold the glory of God in the face of Christ, to see his blessed image perfect in every one of the saints, &c. When all the present blindness of our minds, the errors of our judgment, the perverseness of our will, the disorder and rebellion of our passions, the remaining aversion from God, and disaffection to him, which in this world we complain of, shall all be done away; the flesh shall no more lust against the spirit; or the law in our members against the law of our minds; but an everlasting tranquillity and holy peace take place: a peace which passeth all understanding, without any outward molestation or inward cause of disquiet.

Our corrupted nature shall no more cast forth mire and dirt as now; we shall have no more vain or wicked thoughts; no more sinful fears or foolish hopes; unbecoming heats, unruly desires, sensual inclinations, earthly affections; feeble, slothful, spiritless duties; dead and heartless prayers, cold thanksgivings, &c. But, as we shall then know God without errors, and see our Lord Jesus face to face, so we shall love him, without reserve, more than now we can think; and serve him without dulness and distraction, and praise him without weariness; the spiritual actings of our souls shall have no alloy or dross. And thus shall we be with him, and admire and enjoy him, without end.

Thus, when death is swallowed up in victory, and what was imperfect is done away, and what was corruptible and mortal hath put on immortality, God and Christ shall be all in all; and, when it is truly

and perfectly so, then it is heaven! the blessedness whereof is inconceivable. A blessed person is not expressed in the singular number by the Hebrews, but in the abstract and in the plural. 'Beatitudes,' instead of 'blessed,' because the blessings are as many and great as they have powers and capacities to partake of blessedness; so will it be in heaven: a word, though commonly used, as little understood as holiness, which is one of the greatest mysteries in the world; but will hereafter be fully and delightfully understood by the blessed saints, as the malignity and intrinsic evil of sin shall be by the damned spirits.

Oh! that I might now feel more of this heavenly life, begun and carried on in my soul, by a farther participation of his holy image and conformity to his will! by more vital effects of his indwelling Spirit in my soul, forming it to be a temple to himself, for his own delightful residence! that, forgetting that which I have received, I may still be covetous and desirous of more; forgetting what I have attained, I may press on with a holy eagerness and fervency towards the mark!

When I seriously examine my own heart, had I nothing else to prove the weakness of my grace, and the sinful remainders of unbelief, but the low desires, and the few comfortable thoughts, the seldom joyful prospect of this blessed state; how sad an evidence were it of my low attainments, that I breathe with no more impatience after that blessed holy rest, in the enjoyment of God and Christ, and labour no more in preparing for it! when we profess to believe that all the desires of our souls should be fixed on

him, and filled with him, as our infinite and supreme good; and all the expectations of faith and hope swallowed up in endless admiration, gratitude, and joy; being fully satisfied and at rest in the presence and vision of God, without the least inclination or desire of change. And, by consequence,

There will be no need of novelty, as now, to give a relish to our happiness. All happiness in this world is by comparing a man's present condition with his past, or with that of some inferiors. But the intrinsic good, felicity, and joy, of heaven, will need no such foil to set it off; no such comparison to make it prized. The blessed spirits will never lose the lively sense of that low and miserable condition from which they were raised to so great a glory; and so will ever equally rejoice in the happiness of their translation and wonderful change: and what was at first delightful will for ever be so; and not be disdained or lessened by a continuance, as it happens in this world, from the emptiness, shallowness, and vanity, of the creature. An affectation of vanity, and a desire of change, proceeding always from a sense of want. But holy souls shall never be weary of seeing, loving, and enjoying, God; his blessed presence will afford us undecaying and endless satisfaction; pleasure never to be interrupted or abated, and never to cease. The blessed object is absolutely infinite, and so will be always new to a finite understanding; and continual fresh communications, from his infinite fulness, must needs make our subjective happiness to be always new, and eternally such.

Let me, by such thoughts, quicken and excite my diligent endeavours, after a greater meetness to en-

joy so great a bliss. And, to that end, consider whether any of those happy souls, who have finished their course and obtained their prize, do now regret their utmost diligence, patience, and perseverance, during their short abode here, to secure the blessedness of an endless life: no, no, they are far from repenting the time they spent, the trouble they were at, the care they used, the difficulties they met with, the sufferings they endured, to conflict with the world and the flesh, to resist temptation, to watch over their hearts, and words, and ways, to work out their salvation, to please God, and be faithful to him, &c. They find, to their unspeakable comfort, and everlasting joy, that heaven makes amends for all they could do or suffer, in order to their coming thither. Yea, they find that they were not diligent, and humble, and patient, and circumspect enough. they did not love God, and seek his glory, redeem their time, and improve all their talents and opportunities of doing and receiving good, and give up themselves entirely to prepare for heaven, to that degree they should have done. They find, by the transcendency of the blessed recompense, that it deserved infinitely more than the most active, zealous, Christian upon earth did ever do in order to it.

Lord! quicken my resolutions and endeavours by such thoughts as these. Inspire my sluggish, carnal heart, with holy light, and life, and zeal, and fervour! that, "looking to the things which are not seen, which are eternal, I may lay up a good foundation against the life to come, and so lay hold of eternal life!"

But, alas! how much have I neglected the great

duty of holy meditation! how little skill and experience have I in it! how tameless and insipid oftentimes are my thoughts of God! how confused and unsteady! how little pleasure or advantage have I by contemplating his highest excellencies! Yet, methinks, could I retain but the same awakened, lively, thoughts of heaven and eternal life, which sometimes I have had; might I continually feel the sweet and sacred influence, as for a little season I have sometimes felt it; how little, how very a nothing, would all this world be to me! how comparatively weak its strongest and most alluring snares to draw me off from God! with what an unshaken mind could I refuse and resist them! with what an unconcerned indifference could I look upon all its most charming glory!

Could I maintain such a frame of spirit as I have sometimes had for a little while, in the serious contemplation of divine mysteries, in fervent prayers, and other solemn duties of religion; when the acts of faith were strong and lively, my heart set on fire with love to God, and holy breathings after him; admiring his matchless grace to fallen sinners, and to my soul in particular; when he brought me to the very suburbs of heaven, (though, alas! how seldom!) by the delightful thought of what the blessed spirits above enjoy, in being where Christ is, and beholding his glory; when I was ready to say, within myself, "It is good to be here; this is no other than the gate of heaven; oh! when shall mortality be swallowed up of life!" but, when I thought at any time to fix and settle in such sweet contemplations, how quickly did my lazy, backward,

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heart fly off! how soon did the flame decay and die away! how soon did I find myself fallen down to earth again; sunk down from the bosom of my Lord, presently forgot myself and heaven, to dwell among the pots, and embrace a dunghill! It was not on my own wings, O Lord! that I soared so high; but, I hope, by the breathings of that holy Spirit of light and love, who bloweth when, and where, and how long, he listeth; who gave me, at any time, any such first-fruits of the Spirit; who convinced me of the certainty of the heavenly inheritance, by a lively believing foresight of it; who made me earnestly desire the wings of a dove to be gone, and appear before God in Zion; made me pant and groan to be delivered, and to be with God and Christ, with inexpressible desire and joy, inconceivably mixed with sighs and groans: O my God! let not this experience be only such a taste of the powers of the world to come as is consistent with final apostacy! only the seeming zeal of the stony ground, the rapturous joy of a hypocrite! from the power of imagination and a heated fancy; from the working of mere natural self-love; upon mistaken apprehensions of God, and a false opinion of heaven; but, by the holy effects, let me be assured, of the cause and principle, that it was of God.

Teach me, from the sweetness of a spiritual communion with God now, in any of his appointed ordinances, to argue with myself what that most ravishing satisfaction will be, that the enjoyment of God in heaven will afford the soul. Our holiness is now imperfect to what it shall be; and therefore, our consolation, peace, and joy, is but in part, and

incomparably less than we are assured it will be when we shall be admitted to behold the glory of the Lord. It is now, at most, but as the break of day to the lustre of the meridian sun. But, if in this low imperfect state, we can sometimes obtain so near a view of his glory, and feel such sweet communications of his grace, how much more of this consolation and joy is reserved to heaven! If, in this pilgrim state, the gifts, and graces, and comforts, of the Holy Spirit are so refreshing, O! what hath God prepared beyond the grave for those who love him! If now he sometimes shed abroad his love in our hearts, after such a manner, how much better shall I love him, and feel the influence and evidence of his love to me, when I shall be with him, and see him face to face? If the apprehensions of this future blessedness do now encourage, raise, and animate, my drooping soul, O! what shall I know and see, and how shall I rejoice, when the veil is removed! If a sacramental communion with God and Jesus Christ be sometimes so sweet and so affecting, what will the blessed communion with God and all his saints above amount to! when I shall sit down with all the children of God, in the presence of the bridegroom, at the last great supper of the Lamb, in glory! If the earnest of our inheritance be so reviving, what will be the full possession of it! the hopes of that glorious day, by holy meditation, be so transporting, what will be the end of our faith and hope! If a grape or two in the wilderness be such a cordial, what will be the whole vintage in the land of promise!

Shall I, after all this, forget my own experience,

and run from God and heaven to embrace or seek a perishing toy! shall I hide myself with Saul among the stuff and lumber of this world, when God is calling me to a glorious crown! Art thou, O my soul! a king's son, an heir of heaven, an expectant of such great felicity, and yet stoopest so low! hope for heaven, and yet grasp this earth, and hug the vain appearances of earthly good! hope to be like to God, (and oh! how glorious a hope is that!) to partake of his image, and live eternally with him, and yet be solicitous, anxious, and disquieted, about honour, and money, and temporal interest! and mightily concerned about the momentary gratifications of the flesh and the enjoyments of this world! Art thou a pilgrim and stranger here, and travelling home to the heavenly country, and yet eager and passionate about earthly things? Should a heart, that is set upon heaven, (or may be so, and ought to be so,) burn with such common fire! and neglect the inconceivable riches, and pleasures, and immortal honours, of the other life, and the dawnings of that glory upon my soul by the foretastes of it in this! How great is the disproportion between the heavens and the earth! how vast the circumference of the one, and how small a point the other! how many thousand miles doth the sun travel in the heavens, while it passeth but one inch upon a dial! oh that my affections were carried to heavenly things with a swiftness somewhat answerable to the glorious object. And let their motion to earthly things be rather slow and insensible, like that of the sun on a dial. Since I profess to believe and wait for the heavenly glory, should I not live as seeking such things, as expecting such a glory? And are careless and indifferent thoughts, sleepy, heartless prayers, faint and weak endeavours, becoming in such a case? Shall I not mend my pace, and double my diligence, in my preparatory work, when I can believingly foresee the blessed recompense! waiting for that everlasting light of the Sun of Righteousness, which no eclipse shall ever darken or obscure; for that eternal glorious day which shall never be closed with an evening. When I shall see the face of God in Christ, and be like him, participate more of his image, rest in his love, and dwell for ever in the light of his countenance, according to the prayer and promise of my blessed Saviour.

And ought not such a prospect to sweeten the bitterness of all our intermediate sufferings! We are now oftentimes in heaviness and sorrow, but eternity will be enough for an uninterrupted joy. When we shall exchange all our troubles for everlasting rest, our prisons for perfect liberty, our poverty for the riches of God; darkness for light; discord for love; deformity for beauty; our weaknesses and present languishings for strength and vigour; folly for wisdom; disgrace for glory; sickness and pain for eternal ease and health; the animal for the angelic life; imperfection and pollution for consummate holiness; our sighs, and tears, and sorrows, and complaints, for triumphant, everlasting praise; our losses, affronts, disappointments, perplexities, fears, groans, and death, for crowns and sceptres, hymns and hallelujahs, light and life, and bliss unutterable! and such great things are fit for us to hope, but too great to be now particularly understood and talked of; while "we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly." Yea, it seems as if it were not lawful to utter them, and now they cannot be expressed or fully known; "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive that prepared glory!"

SECTION XXI.

A devout Meditation upon Psalm lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

WHAT is there in heaven or in earth, O Lord! but thy presence, to be valued, loved, desired, chosen, sought, or delighted in? There is nothing in either world desirable without thee, nothing certainly above thee, nothing in comparison with thee. thee alone I trust, on thee I depend, in thee I repose my confidence and hope, from thee I expect all my felicity and salvation. Whatever I can lose, yet with the continuance of thy favour, which is my life, I have still enough. With that I am rich, without it I am poor and miserable. And if I want the love of God, all that heaven and earth can give besides, will not make me happy. In thee, therefore, I would terminate all my affections, all my devotions! there is nothing of heaven to be had on earth but in thy favour, image, and love, and the reviving sense of it. And all the heaven I expect hereafter, is in the more full and immediate communications of these in thy blessed presence. I can desire nothing upon earth, I can enjoy nothing in heaven, but thee! Both here and there thou art, and shalt ever be, my all-sufficient, satisfactory portion, my everlasting all! none else can be the portion of my soul. Nothing else can fill up all its wants, answer all its cravings, be suited to all its capacities, appease and charm all its restless motions, and give complacence to all its desires, and be the proper object of all its affections.

What is there else can justly claim my love, or pretend to my supreme affection, in comparison with God! Thou art alone the proper centre of it. Thine infinite and incomparable excellences (who art love itself) deserve my choicest love, and thy numberless mercies and benefits challenge it as a just debt; as a piece of homage due from all, and of special gratitude also from me. Oh, that I could love thee above all things! who alone art worthy of all my love! O that divine love might be the ruling principle within me, to inspire all my thoughts, to regulate all my desires, to set all the powers of my soul at work? O that it might take the full possession of my heart, and so animate and order all my actions to please him, whom my soul loveth! If, as yet, I cannot say with thine Apostle, "Lord! thou, that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee:" yet, I can say, Lord! thou knowest that I would love thee! Thou hast provided for our happiness, by that first and great command of loving thee with all our hearts, and souls, and strength. But, alas! how backward is my sluggish, carnal heart, to this delightful exercise! Though I have

so oft been told, that "God is love," and that "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." O shed abroad thy love into my soul! that I may feel the vital power and influence of it, and live continually in the love of God, and that nothing

may ever be able to separate me from it.

Whom have I in heaven, or earth, to hope in but thee? I expect more from creatures than they can or will perform; but God can do for me more abundantly than I can ask or think; exceed my largest thoughts, outstrip my highest expectations. And no man was ever disappointed who made thee his hope. When I meet with crosses and wrongs, unfaithfulness, contempt, hatred, and persecution, from men, I need not wonder; I was never told by God it would be otherwise here. Did I look for less from creatures and expect more from God; did I reckon this world to be a state of trial, and not a place of rest and satisfaction; my faith and my desires would be stronger with respect to God and heaven; and temporal calamities and disappointments less afflictive and vexatious.

And what is there, O Lord! in heaven, or in earth, my soul can desire besides thee? Is there any thing desirable but as it is thine, of thee, and from thee? and bears some impression of thine excellence, or brings some intimation of thy love? and what can I reasonably desire; what, that is worth desiring or having, but thou art able to be, and do, and give?

In whom, or what, shall I rejoice but in thee, O Lord? shall I solace myself in transitory goods that slip between my fingers, and perish in the using!

or relish carnal joys, which pollute and debase the soul! when I may and ought to rejoice in thee at all times, as the only source of perfect everlasting joy! Let me then stir up my drooping, desponding, unbelieving heart, to rejoice in God; who takes pleasure in the cheerful service and obedience of his children, who delighteth in those who delight in Is not delighting in God a most essential, vital part of religion? Should it not be my constant frame? Hath not God sufficiently provided, that it may be so? Can I say and believe that God is the portion of my soul; that he is my God, and I hope to live with him for ever, and not rejoice? Or can I consider the grace of the new covenant, the matchless love of Christ, and the precious promises of the gospel, and not see reason to rejoice? Yea, doth my soul love God and endeavour to please him; and is not the very act and exercise of holy love mixed with unspeakable sweetness?

Whom is there, in heaven, or in earth, or in hell, that I ought to fear, but thee? who hast a negative voice in all the designs of men and devils; a hook in their nostrils, a bridle in their mouths, to make them fulfil thy pleasure, and in every thing accomplish thy sovereign decree.

Is there any other, in whom I may repose my trust, but in thee, O Lord? the Rock of Ages! the might of thy power, the unsearchableness of thy wisdom, the righteousness of thy nature, the stability of thy truth, the riches of thy grace, and the immutability of thy promises, are a sure foundation for my soul to trust to and rely upon. Thy word stands firm for ever, and the truth of thine ability and

readiness to help, in every time of need, "endures the same throughout all generations." At all times, and in all places, my soul may trust in thee, and find relief. And they who know thy name will do so; for, "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting kindness and strength," to answer all my doubts, to supply all my wants, and fulfil all my desires. May not God take it unkindly, that I trust him no more? And is it not a criminal unkindness that I give him not the glory of all these excellent attributes, which are the grounds of truth; by a constant, steady, entire dependence on him for all that I need?

I have none in heaven but thee, O Lord! as the object of my invocation and worship. Let other Christians have recourse to new mediators, and call upon other gods; I will make mention of thy name and of thy righteousness only, and ask of thee whatever I need, for the sake of thy Christ, my only adorable Mediator. Him thou hearest always; with him thou art always well pleased. I honour the holy angels as glorious attendants about thy throne, and bless thee for them, as ministering spirits for the good of thy servants; but I dare not invoke or worship them, because they are fellow-servants. On the same account, I honour the memory of departed saints, but neither invoke them nor pay them religious worship. That glory thou wilt not give unto another. I have no precept in Holy Scripture to direct, no promise to encourage, no example to authorise, the invocation of any other but thee; in whom I believe and trust.

Having such a God in heaven, what can I need on earth? His eyes behold me, his wing is over

me, his hand can supply me, his grace provide for me. I can want nothing that is good, unless I should need somewhat which God, the infinitely blessed and all-sufficient God, cannot bestow. If thou be the portion of my soul, all mine enemies cannot make me miserable, unless they can void heaven of the presence of God, hinder his care, bind up his hand, or obstruct his love. But, though my enemies cannot, I fear my sins may. They alone can separate between God and my soul; and, considering the multitude and aggravations of them, and thine unspotted holiness and justice, I should have too much reason to fear and tremble, yea, and utterly despair, if I had none in heaven but thee. But thy word assures me that I have a Mediator there; a faithful and a compassionate High-priest, Jesus Christ, the righteous; whom thou hast exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Who liveth for ever in heaven, to make intercession, till he hath brought me there, to behold his glory, and partake of it.

That glory, O Lord! thou hast reserved for heaven; in this world we only desire, believe, and hope to enjoy it. Whom have I in heaven! that is the place of fruition. What can I desire upon earth? this world is the place of desires, as the other of full enjoyment. Most of that which men call enjoyment in this life, consists but in desire. Desire, or lust, is all that is in this wicked world. The riches of a covetous worldling make him desire more; and the great mystery of intemperance is, to create and increase desires; and desires of another kind are the portion of good men in this world.

Oh! that I could breathe after a state of perfect fruition in heaven with more importunate desires! "Who will give me to be in heaven with thee? on earth I desire nothing." (So one version hath it.) Let me, O my soul! think of heaven as such a place or state of blessed enjoyment! Speak of it, seek it, long for it, prepare for it, as such. And let Jesus Christ, "who is the desire of all nations," (through whom all divine communications are made to fallen sinners,) be the great object of my present desire and love! Let me desire nothing but as in him and for him; that, believing his word, obeying his law, adoring his person, imitating his example, trusting his promise, constrained by his love, partaking of his image, filled with his grace, and comforted by his Spirit, my meditations of him may be sweeter and my love stronger; and I may have nothing more left to desire for myself, but that God, who hath raised and exalted, would keep alive my faith and hope, and holy desires, till he hath made me meet to be with him; and, after having guided me by his grace, and Spirit, and counsels here on earth, would receive me to his most blessed and glorious presence in heaven! Amen, amen.

SECTION XXII.

The glorious appearance of Christ, to judgment, considered as certain. The terror and astonishment, confusion and despair, of wicked Jews and Christians, to behold their Judge, and hear his condemning sentence to everlasting destruction.

WHEN our blessed Saviour shall appear to judge the world, I read that it shall be "in his own glory, the glory of his Father, and of the holy angels." If, by "the glory of his Father," be meant that of the Divinity, as the original and author of all things in nature, as the almighty Creator of the world; and, by "the glory of his holy angels," be understood that of the legal administration, the law being given by the disposition of the angels; and, by "his own glory," that of the gospel, as he is the Messiah; that in the glory of all these he shall come to judgment; we have a summary account of the three different revelations which God hath made of himself to mankind; by the light of nature, that of the law, and the more manifest one, of the gospel; according to which every man is to be judged at the last day.

Though we cannot directly tell what, or how great, our Lord's glory will then be, we may be certain it will be suitable to the dignity of his royal person; suitable to the grandeur of his Father's majesty, with the splendour of a triumphant prince, who is "heir of all things," and hath all power in heaven and in earth committed to him; the great Lord of both

worlds, head of angels and men; and suitable to his glorious office, as Mediator, and the appointed Judge of quick and dead.

If, at his transfiguration, his face shone, and his raiment was white and glittering, how much more splendid will his last appearance be! When the bodies of his saints shall be seven times brighter than the lustre of the sun! and, if his members shall then be so glorious, how transcendently more so will their head, their Lord appear! If the delivery and promulgation of the law, on mount Sinai, was accompanied with such circumstances of terrible majesty, how much more may we suppose the great assize will be attended with, when he comes to judge for the violation of the law and the contempt of the gospel! And, if even Moses did then exceedingly quake and fear, what will be the consternation and trembling of the wicked world at the coming of Christ! "when he shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire," with a glorious retinue of his mighty angels, as so many bright stars about the more glorious Sun of Righteousness! The lights of heaven shall be eclipsed; the visible sun shall veil its blushing head, as infinitely outshone; the present glory of the creation be all benighted by reason of his transcendent brightness. Yea, the heavens shall be wrapped up as a scroll, the elements melt away with a mighty noise, the earth and all its works be burned up, and the whole universe, as one great bonfire, to adorn the triumph of our Lord's appearance: and this ushered in by the voice of an archangel, proclaiming his approach; and the voice of God, supplying the use of a trumpet, to raise the dead, and possess mankind with an awful reverence of their Judge!

Thus, in triumph, as a conqueror and a judge, shall He come again, who once appeared in the form of a servant, to be judged and condemned by man. Then he was called King in scorn; now he will appear as much above all earthly and human greatness as once he stooped, for our sakes, beneath it. Then the contempt of nations, and no way esteemed desirable, when he came from the womb of his virgin mother; now the terror of the world, when he comes again from the right hand of his Father! No more to be subject to a state of meanness, but "to render vengeance to all who know not God and obey not the gospel; and to be glorified in the saints, and admired in and by all them that believe."

He was put to shame in the days of his flesh, made himself of no reputation, and accounted unworthy to live; but, when he comes again, he will put on a garment of vengeance, to repay fury to the enemies of his cross, and make his wicked despisers rise again to shame and everlasting contempt. They that once howed the knee to him in mockery, and shook their heads at him in derision, shall then "see every knee bow before him, of things in heaven, things in earth, and under the earth:" angels, men, and devils, in subjection to him, as Lord and King. Pilate, who condemned him as his prisoner, shall appear before him as his rightful Judge, and know that he was a very different king and monarch from the Roman emperor. The false witnesses, who accused him of blasphemy, shall be impeached by one another, and their own guilty consciences, before his bar, with the other Jews, who once dragged him before their tribunal; and be confounded to stand

before his judgment-seat. His crucifiers behold him on a throne of glory whom they nailed to an infamous cross. They shall be astonished to behold him sitting at the right hand of God, whose hands they bound, whose body they scourged, whose side they pierced. They, who crowned him with thorns, shall (with all the world) behold him with a crown of glory. They, that spit on him, and smote him on the face with the fist of wickedness, shall have their own faces covered with confusion. They that approved his condemnation to death, as a criminal, shall be sentenced from his mouth, as their Judge, to everlasting destruction. They that scourged him, as a malefactor, shall be beaten with many stripes. They, that made him stagger under the weight of the cross, shall sink under the guilt and punishment of despising it. They that nailed him to the accursed tree, between thieves and robbers, shall be sentenced to endless punishment, in much worse company. They, who gave him gall and vinegar to drink, shall not be able to get a drop of water to cool their own tongues. Where, then, shall the wicked and ungodly of the Christian world appear, who crucify the Son of God afresh; since he hath declared himself to be so, by his resurrection and the mission of the Holy Ghost, and fulfilling his threatened vengeance on the nation of the Jews.

If the Jews shall have a sorer condemnation than ignorant heathens, who never heard of Christ, never saw his miracles, or were informed of his doctrine, how shall we escape? for he will come again as a conqueror and a judge, and not as a sufferer and a Surety, as he came at first; and, though he was

"numbered with transgressors, and made his grave with the wicked," at his first appearance, he shall hereafter be attended with the shouts of angels, who excel in strength, and the joyful acclamations of his saints, glittering as the light, and paying homage to Him as the Judge of quick and dead. He, whom we have despised, shall then be encompassed with a dazzling glory that will confound us. He, whom we have affronted, shall be clothed with a majesty that shall astonish us. He, whom we have offended, shall be armed with power and with wrath to punish us; and all that continue to lift up the heel against him shall then be made his footstool; all that refuse to kiss the sceptre of his grace, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod.

The Holy Scripture doth frequently and expressly assure us, that he will thus come again, and for these ends. He is exalted, and gone to heaven, as the Head of his church and the King of Glory; and, when he foretold his ascension, he gave a promise of his return. The heavens are to contain him till the restitution of all things. By his providence, and by the Holy Spirit, he now carries on the designs of his death; and, when these are accomplished, he will appear to the terror of the wicked. He is entered, as our forerunner, within the veil, to prepare mansions, and to take possession for us, and will not always leave us in this dark and defiling world. He knoweth our sorrows, and heareth our prayers, and bottles our tears; takes notice of our groans, and in all our afflictions he is afflicted. Being reconciled by his death, at his first coming, we shall be saved by his life, since he lives to make good his word of coming again.

How comfortable is the news of it! how joyful will be the meeting, to such as expect and prepare to see him! when the sea and the graves shall yield up their dead, and all the prisoners of hope lift up their heads, arise, go up, and meet the Lord in the air, and ascend with him to the heavenly glory. But who can express how dismal a sight this will be to the secure and the impenitent, to all who die in their sins! to behold their Judge (who formerly offered to be their Saviour) upon a glorious throne, and all the children of Adam summoned before his tribunal! to have nothing to answer against his charge, and no way to escape his condemning sentence! They despised him as a Lamb, offered in sacrifice to take away the sins of the world; but shall no longer to do so, when he comes, as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to devour and destroy the enemies of his cross. Now, they will not own him for their Lord, but shall then find he is so, by the vengeance he will execute.

As a Jesus, as a Saviour, they rejected him, making light of his salvation, despising his mercy, refusing his grace; but the neglected gospel will then be a more killing letter than the law. He who, by his ambassadors, doth now entreat sinners to be reconciled, will then be as deaf to their entreaties, as they have been to his. Because they would not turn at his reproof, hearken to the call of his word, and obey his voice, they must hear the sentence of condemnation, and feel the execution of it, whether they will or not; yea, the blood of his cross will upbraid, accuse, and plead against, them. And, whatsoever foolish evasions they now make, to

continue in security, they shall then be speechless and self-condemned. Nothing will be able to hide them from the amazing presence of their Judge, or from the wrath of the Lamb. He then will inflict an intolerable and rightcous vengeance, an everlasting destruction, upon all the ignorant and ungodly world: the greatest, the stoutest, the boldest, of them shall then be humbled, and stand before Christ's tribunal upon an equal level with the meanest; seized with horror, filled with guilt, anguish, and despair; and find, to their eternal confusion, that the "Judge is no respecter of persons, but every man shall receive according to his works;" the mighty shall not be spared for his greatness, nor the mean man for his poverty.

O fool, O wretch, that I am! shall many then say, who now brave it out in pride and vanity, unconcerned about a future judgment! not to be persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, which I was so often warned and foretold of! What refuge of hope can I now fly to? What can I say for myself? What can I do to escape? To die, to exist no longer! I would have no compassion on my own soul; I would not so much as consider its danger: I shall now find none from Christ, I can expect none! his mercy is gone, and gone for ever! I am lost, undone, tormented, and must eternally be so! O the amazement, horror, and despair, of self-condemned sinners in that day of vengeance!

O my soul! what is there of greater consequence, or of greater certainty, from the word of God, than that I must appear to judgment, when Christ shall come again? Lord, teach me to believe it firmly,

to consider it often, to lay it seriously to heart, to act under the influence and power of it, as long as I live; that, at the great resurrection from the dead, I may lift up my head with a joyful hope, and find the Judge to be my friend, my advocate, my Jesus, and not my enemy and destroyer!

SECTION XXIII.

Meditations of the glory of Christ, in his glorified saints, and of the thankful admiration of believers, when he shall come again from heaven, which shall be continued to all eternity.

THE terror of our Lord's appearance to judgment cannot be greater to the wicked, than the comfort and joy of it will be to the saints. When they shall see him whom their souls love, ascend with him to heaven, and be welcomed, according to his promise, with those endearing words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." was for your sakes I assumed flesh, lived on earth, and died on the cross, to purchase this glorious kingdom for you, which I now come to give you the possession of: it was for this I prayed and suffered on earth, for this I interceded ever since in heaven: I was heard in that prayer, accepted in those sufferings, and my intercession granted; 'that, where I am, ye may be also, to behold my glory.' Come, therefore, good and faithful servants, enter into your Lord's joy." Oh! what ravishing words will these be! what an ecstacy of love and kindness is implied in them! what matter of rejoicing may it now give me, to admit the hope that my blessed Saviour will say such words as these to me, and bid me stand on his right hand among his sheep! Oh! what an exulting frame of soul will such expressions raise! How shall all my doubts, and fears, and sorrows, be scattered in a moment, and cease for ever! O glorious day, when my blessed Lord shall thus publicly acknowledge me for his own, and plead my cause against all the accusations of Satan, and the malicious calumnies of all his instruments! when I shall be able to say of all my sins and sufferings, as my Lord upon the cross, "It is finished! it is finished!" My warfare being accomplished, being more than conqueror over all, through him who loved me, and died for me, and now is come to wipe away all tears from mine eyes, as it were, with the napkin that was bound about his head when laid in the grave, all being the fruit of his meritorious death; then shall I have nothing more to fear, or wish, or beg. I shall offend, provoke, and dishonour him no more; nor, by my folly and scandal, discredit his holy name and gospel; but, by consummate holiness, be fitted to rejoice in his presence and love, and celebrate his praise for ever. I shall never more lament his absence, or complain of his anger; never see a cloud on his face, or a frown in his look, any more. Now, I must wait and pray, struggle and strive, labour and suffer, desire and expect, believe and hope, &c. but then, perfect rest and holiness, love and joy, vision and fruition, bliss

and glory, unutterable and everlasting, shall take place.

All the attributes of God, all the wonderful perfections of Christ, will then be glorified in believers, and admired by them. His invariable truth will then be honoured, which they trusted to, and waited for: for now they shall know, and find, they did not wait in vain, they hoped in his word, and ventured their salvation upon it: and now they shall receive the end of their faith and hope, infinitely beyond what they ever expected or believed.

The glory of divine wisdom will then appear, when the constitution, administration, and design, of the Mediator's kingdom shall be fully known, in the admirable order and beauty of every part of it, with the exact tendency of all the particulars to one glorious end, and the whole undertaking crowned with so blessed an issue. What is now a mystery, even to the believers themselves, and hath a veil upon it, shall then no longer be so; all the riddles of God's grace and providence shall be plainly understood. Oh! how transporting a view must it needs be, when the glory of all the divine attributes, which God intended to accomplish in and by Christ, shall be manifest to his redeemed saints! the whole method of our salvation will then appear to be the fruit of unsearchable wisdom, when we shall all see the reality, and substance, and entire scheme of all that God designed in and by him; all that was typified of him, and foretold concerning him in the Old Testament. How will it all appear to be " the manifold wisdom of God!"

As, in uniting heaven and earth together in the

person of our Mediator, fulfilling the truth of a terrible threatening in his death, and, by the same way, accomplishing many gracious promises; satisfying justice, and, at the same time, showing mercy; manifesting infinite grace and kindness by shedding of blood; conquering death by dying, and disarming the law by obedience to it, &c. afterwards, subduing the world to the faith of the gospel, by the foolishness of preaching; making men wise to salvation, by the knowledge of the cross; and spreading that faith the more, by all the opposition made against it, &c. How wonderfully will a clear view of these things discover and glorify the wisdom of God!

But the love and grace of Christ, the infinite

goodness and compassion of God, will then be magnified in an especial manner. What, but sovereign love, in the whole contrivance and counsel of God about our redemption! What admirable love and grace in the whole management of that design! What unparalleled kindness in the accomplishment of it, by the sacrifice of the Son of God! And how glorious will this love appear, when he shall come again to give us the full harvest of all his purchase! With what admiring thankfulness shall believers then contemplate the unsearchable riches of his grace! In all the parts and instances of his humiliation, from his conception to his crucifixion and burial; in all the evidences and discoveries made of it, from the first promise to its completion; yea, from before the foundation of the world, in the covenant of peace between the Father and the Son, until his second coming to judge the world, and deliver up the kingdom to his Father.

How shall we then admire and adore his powerful grace, which snatched us, as fire-brands, out of everlasting burnings; that effectually shone into our minds by heavenly light; conquered the opposition of our stubborn wills; sanctified our carnal hearts; rescued us from the tyranny of Satan, and the dominion of lust; giving, cherishing, and preserving, the holy seed of grace, and making it spring up to eternal life; defeating the malicious and subtle endeavours of the devil to destroy it; enabling us to endure tribulation, and persevere to the end; giving us victory over death; conducting us through the dark valley; raising our bodies; reviving and reuniting them to our souls, and rendering them glorious like his own body; and, at length, rewarding our imperfect services with eternal life! Yea, though our best services were mixed with sin, our holiest duties spotted, our most courageous sufferings mixed with unbelief, yet rewarded with a blessedness that hath no alloy of evil, but all the ingredients of a perfect felicity, and nothing to lessen and interrupt it. How shall we then admire the bounty of our gracious Lord, the freeness, tenderness, riches, and the exceeding greatness and glory, of his infinite goodness and grace to poor believers!

With what ecstacies of joy and gratitude may we imagine that our Lord will be then admired by all his redeemed ones! Saying, 'This is he, who made our peace with God, and reversed the sentence of damnation, which we were under; who bought us with the price of his most precious blood, bore the wrath of his Father, and submitted to an infamous and accursed death for us; he assumed our

nature, that we might partake of his; became the Son of Man, that we might be made the children of God; " for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might become rich;" he stooped to bear the greatest ignominy and reproach, to confer honour on us; he was, for a time, forsaken of his Father, that we might not be so eternally; he felt the stroke of his anger against sin, that we might not perish under it; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs, that we might rejoice; his agonies and bloody sweat were for our refreshment, and by his stripes we are healed; he bowed his head on the cross, that we might lift up ours in triumph; and, because we had eaten of the forbidden fruit, he hung on the accursed tree. It was for us that he suffered the frowns of heaven, the enmity of hell, the rage of devils, the hatred and persecution of the world; he was judged, that we might not come into condemnation; he was crucified, that we might be glorified; and he is now come again finally and fully to effect it.

"Othe height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," but calls for admiration and everlasting gratitude! This is the blessed day we longed, and waited, and prayed for! This is our gracious, our glorious Lord, whose love melted our heart, whose promise was our support, whose word was our rule, whose Spirit was our comforter, whose cross was our crown, and the hope of his appearance our chief consolation.

Lord, what am I? what was I? that the ever blessed Son of God should do, and suffer, and purchase, all this for me! I can remember when I was

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ignorant of God, a stranger to him, at enmity with him, under the power of darkness and the devil, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hastening to hell, and liable to his wrath. But he chose me out of the world, stamped his image upon me, pardoned my sins, and embraced me in the arms of his unchangeable love. O happy change! and yet how little did I prize his grace, admire his love, and express my own, or promote his glory, and honour him in the eyes of others! How did I dishonour my profession and holy calling, as his disciple, by aggravated apostacy! But he recovered me by repentance, and healed my backslidings, and received me graciously, because he loved me freely. O admirable grace! to pardon, and save, and bring to glory, such an unthankful wretch as I have been! to make such a difference between me and others, whom I knew on earth! That the same power which makes them miserable now, makes me blessed! That, when they are banished from his presence into everlasting destruction, I am admitted to behold his glory, and shall dwell with him for ever!

Oh! how much more do I now see and find, than ever I believed, of the love of Christ, and his promised salvation! How much more glorious is the person of my Redeemer! How much more excellent is the heavenly state than ever I thought or expected! I could not have imagined the thousandth thousandth part of that which I now see and feel! I cannot but admire, and spend an eternity in admiring and praising, the incomparable grace and glory of my blessed Redeemer.

Such holy admiration will certainly produce the most thankful adoration of our Lord Jesus; saying, one to another, O bless the Lord of love and glory! who humbled himself so low, as our Mediator, and hath exalted us so high, as the blessed fruit of it! How can we ever enough adore and praise him, who condescended so far, and hath done and suffered so much for us! Sée how the holy angels worship this King of glory! And have not every one of us more reason to do so? O! let all the choir of heaven celebrate his glorious love! and let us, his redeemed, his glorified, ones, say continually, " Let the Lord be magnified, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God, his Father," and, through him, ours.

O merciful Saviour! O glorious change! O happy society! with whom we shall eternally adore our common Lord. We can some of us remember, when we lived together on earth, how we wept and prayed, and fasted and mourned, together; how we suffered, and complained, and sinned, together. O! the marvellous change our Redeemer hath now wrought for us, and in us! these bodies, these souls, this life, this place, this company, these enjoyments, are not like those in yonder world. But, alas! who can describe what believers shall then think and say, to extol their Saviour! How small a portion is it we understand of that world! How little can I conceive, and how much less express! Blessed be God we know so much, as the matter of our joyful hopes! and for ever blessed be God, who hath promised and provided such a glory for us, as cannot now be fully known.

What inexpressible sweetness might believers taste, by rejoicing in hope, did a more lively faith realize all this to their souls! We might listen, as it were, to the shouts and acclamations of the saints above, and say Amen to their thanksgivings. We might behold them about the throne of God, and of the Lamb, with palms of victory in their hands, a crown of glory on their heads, and songs of triumph in their mouths, saying, " Hallelujah! Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. And worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And again, "Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."

Whence is it, O my soul! if indeed I believe and expect all this, that I can hear, and read, and think, and speak of, these great things, with no more ardent affection, suitable preparations, importunate prayers, and vigorous desires? How should the believing thoughts of that day promote my heavenly-mindedness, self-denial, contempt of the world, patience, and perseverance; quicken my zeal, secure my steadfastness, and give life and spirit to my prayers for the hastening of it! How should my soul rise toward heaven by holy love and desire! Ascend and meet him, get as near him as I can, breathe after more of his presence, and beg him to prepossess my heart, to anticipate his second coming

by clearer discoveries of his love, and fuller communications of his grace! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

SECTION XXIV.

Concerning the examination of a man's heart and life; the reasonableness, advantages, and necessity of it. Some directions and advice concerning the time and manner. That we may know in what preparedness we are for eternity.

I AM hastening every year, every day, to the period of this life: I must shortly appear before my glorious Judge, and experience those terrors or comforts, this blessedness or misery, which I have now read of. Shall I not therefore inquire which of the two belongs to me? Is it not worth considering whither I must go, and how I shall fare, when I quit this body? what is like to be my next habitation? to which of the two unchangeable states I shall be adjudged? Shall an inquiry of so much consequence be put off to an indefinite hereafter? Do I not desire to know the worst, while a remedy may be found? Or, am I content to die, through an unwillingness to discover that I am sick? The question to be resolved is of infinite weight. Shall I not spend a few hours to know what will become of me for ever? An error is more than possible, it is easy to mistake; and the hazard of doing so is unspeakably great. How many thousands perish eternally, even under the light of the gospel, who never suspected their danger! How ordinary, how common, a thing is it for men to be thus deceived! how successful is the devil in this stratagem against the souls of men!

Is it not then a most criminal stupidity to be contentedly ignorant and unresolved, whether I am reconciled to God or not; whether I am led by the flesh or by the Spirit; whether I am in the broad or narrow way, which lead to such contrary ends; that is, whether, if I die in this condition, I shall be saved or perish? Can such an inquiry be frivolous or indifferent? Is the subject of it so contemptible, or my concern in it so small, that it merits not to be attentively considered? Shall I never ask my soul, till I am leaving this world, (the unfittest time of all to begin so important an affair,) What am I? To whom do I belong? Whose image do I bear? How have I lived, and what do I do? What do I love most? What do I most constantly desire, and choose, and seek? How doth the pulse of my soul beat? Is it quickest towards God, or towards the world? Whither am I going? What will be the final upshot and issue of my present course? Is it heaven or hell I must be translated to by dying? What security have I got for eternal life? What provision have I made? What foundation have I laid?

How strangely infatuated are most men, who talk of an everlasting life as an article of their creed, and say they count upon it, that they must dwell in happiness or misery for ever; and seldom or never bethink themselves in good earnest, and for any

time, with a settled composed exercise of thought, which of these two is like to be their lot! Or, if they begin to search and try themselves, they come to no conclusion, or conclude too hastily; they pluck off the plaster as soon as it begins to smart; they are either frighted with the horrid prospect of past crimes, or, having escaped the grosser pollutions of the world, judge too favourably of their own case. They commonly do the work but by halves, and so go from the glass, and forget what manner of persons they were.

Let me, therefore, O my soul! sequester myself from the world, to commune with my own heart, to reflect upon my past life, and look into my present state, to recollect and review the most considerable passages of my course and time hitherto. Oh! how neglected and disused a practice is this, which doth challenge and require our principal and most serious concerns about it! And how many begin it, and are discouraged and leave off, without reaching the end of such an inquiry!

How much wiser, in this respect, are the children of this world, in their generation, than the children of light? Who is so exact in his accounts between God and his own soul, as tradesmen in their dealings with one another? Who is at the pains to write down his sins and his mercies? the grounds of his fear, and the encouragements of his hope? or keeps a journal and diary of his spiritual state? Who doth, at set times, once a month, or once a quarter, or even once a year, take a just view of himself, his heart, and life, and state, as a Christian; that he may see what he hath received and done, what he

owes, and what he may expect; that he may know whether he thrive or decay; whether he increase or decrease; whether he go backward or forward; whether he be richer or poorer this year than the last? And is it not a symptom that you are declining, when you love not to examine your accounts? Is there not ground of jealousy and suspicion that you are behind-hand, because you are loath to inquire whether you are or not, and unwilling to know the worst of your condition? Nevertheless, without such inquiries, and bringing the matter to a determination, at what uncertainties must we live? And how inconceivable a hazard do all hypocrites and unrenewed sinners run? And how reasonable, how necessary is it, that we should know, and, in order to it, prove, ourselves? We must therefore bestow time and serious diligence about it, that we may examine matters to the bottom, and come to some result; so that we may form a right judgment concerning our own case.

He that would do it to good purpose must endeavour to understand clearly the terms of the covenant on God's part, and on ours; and take care not to judge of himself by mistaken rules, by a false standard that God will not justify, or by any such characters as will not conclude. But most men are unwilling to bring themselves to a trial, or to let conscience deal plainly and faithfully with them. They are stupidly secure, and seek not the necessity of this duty, or do not suspect themselves. They presume they need not be at that trouble; or are so taken up with the world, that they cannot find time and leisure for it. And many men dare not bring

their hearts and ways to a trial. There is commonly some secret lust indulged, which they are loath to let go; but most go on in sin, and perish eternally, because they think there is no danger of perishing; and never repent and make their peace with God, because they fancy and presume it is done already.

Therefore, let me beg of thee, whoever thou art, who readest this, to put the case to thyself, seriously to admit the doubt, whether you do not mistake; make the supposition, that you have not hitherto sufficiently considered the state of your soul. You are confident that all is well, and thereupon are unwilling to examine farther; but, for that very reason, you ought to question, whether it be so or not. Do but ask yourself seriously, what is the ground of your good opinion concerning yourself? For what reason can you thus conclude? Did you ever seriously lay to heart the characters and description, which the Scriptures give of those whom Christ will own at the last day, and of such whom he will reject and reprobate? With unfeigned application to your own case, have you therewith proved yourselves? And come to a settled judgment, after a deliberate inquiry? And was the conclusion to your comfort and joy? If so, what influence hath it since had upon your heart and life? Hath it promoted purity, thankfulness, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of this world, and stronger desires after the image, love, and presence, of God, and the glory of Christ? Moreover, consider,

Is not this a good while ago? How have you behaved yourself ever since? Have you not reason to look back with shame? If you but slightly ex-

amined yourself formerly, resolve to do it more effectually now; review the sins you have been since guilty of; and, if you have not done any thing considerable of this kind, you ought now to begin. It is seasonable to begin the year by such an exercise; and it will be found of great use in all the following parts of it; especially, when you come to examine yourself afresh, in order to the Lord's supper. For we ought frequently to renew the sad remembrance of our former sins; that, from time to time, we may renew our repentance, which is the work of our life, and not of one day. And he that cometh to the sacrament, and will look no farther back than to the last communion, may possibly presume too much, that all was then as it should be, and not be humble enough.

If any one, therefore, resolve, in good earnest, upon a holy life, and seriously design to prepare for eternity, as it is necessary to make a general review of his life, so I desire to afford him the best counsel I can, in order to it.

begun this work, to employ one hour at least in a day, for several days following, in writing down the most considerable passages of your life you can remember, desiring God's assistance therein; and keeping your eye upon your end, in the whole; that is, thinking seriously that it is in order to eternity that you now examine yourself. Choose a place of retirement, and the most convenient time, that you may not be interrupted, and when your heart is most serious. Every man may divide his life into several parts, as, from nfancy till he left

off going to school, or was bound apprentice, or settled in any way of education. From thence till fixed in some employment; if a married person, till entered into that condition. And from thence to another remarkable period, or to the present time. It may better assist some persons' memory, to consider the several places of their abode, and compute according to them. In each portion of time, recollect what sins you were most addicted to; in what instances, with what frequency, and with what other various aggravations, you committed them; and what have been the effects and consequences of those sins to yourselves and others, in order to repentance and godly sorrow; which must not be judged of by tears, but grief, and inward hatred of sin. Remembering that no man is the better merely for being examined, if there follows nothing after it. It is in order to a judgment to be passed upon ourselves. It is to search out our own iniquity, our beloved sin, in order to the mortification of it. Goliath must first be slain, if ever the other Philistines are conquered. In some, it is pride; in others, worldliness; in some uncleanness; in others, drunkenness, gluttony, &c. That you may discover it, observe what sin it is you are most unwilling to part with; which you could even wish were not forbidden.

. Which you have formerly been most apt to plead

for, to extenuate, to excuse, and hide.

The thoughts whereof do most frequently occur, especially when alone; first in the morning, and last at night; and are most distracting in prayer and worship.

Which an awakened conscience hath most plainly

told you of, under a sermon, or at a sacrament, or under some heavy affliction, or on a sick-bed, &c.

Which you can least bear to be reproved for.

Which the temperature of your body doth most incline to.

Which your calling, employment, company, and converse, administer the greatest temptations for.

That especially which hath the throne of the heart, and sets all the faculties at work, to contrive fuel and opportunities for its gratification.

Observe likewise what passion was most predominant in each period of time, or is yet so; and what ill effects it hath produced. Consider farther what dangerous temptations you have met with, how you have fallen by, or been able to resist them. Consider withal the time and the means whereby God hath at any time formerly awakened, convinced, and humbled you; what purposes of amendment, and promises of reformation, you have ever made; and how far you have, or have not, performed them. Recollect, likewise, all the special mercies you have received from God, in every state and period of your life, in order to thankfulness: the last section of these papers may give you some assistance therein: and consider what returns you have made to God, for all his kindness.

You may do well to consider yourself also in the relations you have stood to others, as inferior, equal, or superior; in family, church, or state; in your calling, profession, employment, &c. And examine in what more notorious instances you have been faulty in your relative duties. How you did ordinarily carry it in your place and station; for that i

the best, the truest picture of a man, which is like him in his ordinary, every day's habit. Particularly, reflect upon the sins you have committed in company with others; by whose example you have been drawn to sin, who may probably have been tempted by yours, and bewail it, and, if the persons are living, admonish them to repent; and, if you have injured and wronged any, acknowledge your fault, and, to the utmost of your power, make speedy restitution. If any of your companions in sin are dead, and, you fear, died without repentance, humble yourself particularly before God, for having contributed to their damnation. I know of some who have made such a catalogue of their sins, with the most observable aggravations of them; which they constantly preserved, and frequently reviewed, to keep them humble, penitent, watchful, and thankful; and, on some occasions of secret humiliation, have spread them before the Lord, (as Hezekiah did the writing of his enemy,) covering themselves with shame and confusion of face, by considering what they have been, and thence admiring the riches of free grace, in the forgiveness of such crimes, through the blood of Christ.

"Examine me, O Lord, and prove me: try my reins and my heart; for thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes, and I will walk in thy truth. Thou hast searched me, O Lord, and known me; thou knowest my thoughts afar off; all my secret sins are in the light of thy countenance; and thou art acquainted with all my ways. Set my sins in order before me, that I may repent, and forsake them. Show me mine infirmities and wickedness, that I may watch

against them. And teach me to judge and condemn myself, that I may not be judged of the Lord, or condemned with the world."

SECTION XXV.

How Christians ought to examine their decays of grace and piety. The greatness of their sin, and of their loss, under such a declension: God's displeasure, and departure from them, considered, to awaken endeavours of a recovery. In what manner the faith of adherence may be acted by one who hath no assurance.

IT cannot but be of use to believers also, at stated times, to examine themselves, concerning their languishings and decays in grace, falling from their first love to a spirit of indifferency and lukewarmness, disorderly walking or unfruitfulness; whether "grey hairs are not here and there upon them, and they know it not." For God may withdraw by degrees, so that his departure may not presently be perceived. And some kind of activity in duty may be continued upon false principles, and from common assistance, while a Christian, as to his spiritual state, may be under a dangerous consumption. It is not difficult for others to observe it sometimes, and would be visible enough to themselves, would they spare a few hours to examine the matter. The punishment of such backslidings, the loss of the quickening and comforting presence of the Holy Spirit, deserves likewise to be inquired into, in order to a speedy remedy, and should enforce the counsel.

I mean not barely the ebbing of affections in the duties of religion, or the want of life and quickening from sensible consolations, which new converts (especially such as have been reclaimed from a course of notorious impiety) have more of at first than afterwards. This, doubting Christians should particularly take notice of, by the instance of the prodigal, who was extraordinarily feasted at his first return, but was doubtless contented afterwards with the ordinary provisions of his father's house. Neither doth God dispense the same measure to all alike, nor to any alike at all times; some, who are called to greater services and sufferings than others, or had greater conflicts before conversion, may have a greater share than the rest of their brethren. ther will the same degree of grace, imparted to some persons, so discernibly move and comfort, as it will do some others of a different temper. It is not, therefore, so much to be the matter of our inquiry (if at all it need to be so) whether we have more or less of sensible joy, in the performance of our duty, but

Whether we are not fallen and declined, as to the inward vital acts of grace, and in the outward fruits of holiness; whether we have such clear convincing apprehensions of divine and spiritual truths, and the mysteries of the gospel, as formerly; whether our minds are not become more vain and heedless; whether our knowledge of God, and of the revelations of his will, be as powerful and efficacious upon our hearts and lives as heretofore; whether there be not less frequency, less consistency, less inward satisfaction in holy serious thoughts than formerly. You were wont to pray, and endeavour that God might be first and last in your thoughts every day, and, by frequent ejaculations in civil affairs, to maintain a daily converse with God; but now you mind not whether it be so or not; yea, you cannot but know, that it is not thus with you still. It was once your burden to be pestered with foolish, filthy, worldly, vain thoughts, especially on the Lord's day, or in the worship of God; you rejected and disowned them, you lamented and prayed against them; do so much as examine, whether it be thus still.

Consider all your affections, and their several objects; and see whether a criminal lukewarmness, hath not diffused itself into every one of them. Examine every grace, and see whether your faith, hope, love, holy desires, and delight in God, be not miserably abated, as to the strength and vigour, the efficacy and frequent exercise, of every one of them; so that your thoughts of God are few, cold, and lifeless, without desire, delight, and love.

Consider the opportunities of public worship, and solemn occasions of approaching the divine presence. Are they as much the desire of your souls, and the rejoicing of your hearts, as once they were? Are you not more easily diverted from them, less satisfied and refreshed by them? Are not all gospelordinances less powerful and quickening, and your profit and advantage thereby unspeakably less than formerly? Do you hunger, and thirst, and pant, as

the hart after the brooks, to draw nigh to God, and come into his courts? Do you make conscience of preparing beforehand? Do you come with a real desire, and design, and expectation, of profiting and bettering your spirits? Do you join in every part of divine worship with that attention, seriousness, and composure of mind, and taste the sweetness and benefit of such solemnities, as formerly? Are such services performed with that awe of God, with that humility, fervency, and intenseness of spirit, as sometimes they were? Are you not more negligent and unconcerned before and after, whether you find any thing of this or not? Though your desires are weak, your heart flat, your thoughts wandering, your spirits trifling, so the work be done, and the duty be over, (in how formal, customary, and careless, a manner soever it be,) you consider it not, you lay it not to heart, you reflect not upon it, you bewail it not, or, at least, are better contented, and sooner quieted, and take less notice of the frame of your heart, in such duties, than formerly.

Examine, farther, how it is with you as to the great distinguishing duties of an upright Christian; (if performed as they ought to be;) I mean secret prayer and meditation; are you as strict and careful, constant and conscientious, frequent and abundant, in these, as formerly? May not our closets and places of retirement witness against us? How seldom are we there! How quickly are we gone! How easily diverted! How soon tired! How do we trifle in that work, and shuffle it over, and take up with the shadow and image of prayer! Our former humble and importunate prayers, joyful

thanksgivings, and sweet contemplation of the mysteries of religion, compared with our present daily practice, will testify that we are declined and fallen.

Moreover, consider the evil of sin, and how your heart stands affected to it. Are not your hatred of sin, and zeal against it, much decayed; especially with respect to inward spiritual sins, such as the secret workings of unbelief and distrust, pride, envy, uncharitableness, &c.? Do you bewail it, strive against it, and shun the occasions, and fear the temptations, that may lead you into sin, as once you did? Have you not lost much of that tenderness and holy jealousy over your heart and ways you formerly had? Do you not now make more bold with temptation? Are you not oftener conquered? and with less reluctance? and by smaller temptations, &c.?

Are you not more unserviceable? Root and fruit in a withering condition? God less honoured, and others less profited and edified by your example and life? Do you not adhere more to the world? Conform to it, and comply with it in many things, which formerly you dared not have done? And are every day waxing worse? Make a pause awhile, and bethink yourself what this will come to at last, when even the little good that remains is ready to die.

May I not ask such Christians, or desire them to ask themselves, What is already the effect and consequence of this declension? Is not God's Spirit removed, and the light of his countenance eclipsed? Yea, as to many of them, are they not under sad apprehensions of God's displeasure? Do

they not feel the terrors of the Lord? Do they not walk heavily from day to day? They that could once converse with God on all occasions, as a Friend and a Father, do now think of God, and are troubled; thick darkness doth encompass them round about; they have lost the sense of his love, the comforts of his presence, and their song in the night, and see no relief. This is a more hopeful case, however, than their's, who are under great backsliding and desertion, and hardly sensible of it. To awaken and assist both, consider, I beseech you, whence you are fallen, and what you have lost, and what will be the issue of this, if sickness, or some smart affliction, overtake you, or if you should die in this condition; and inquire seriously and presently into the cause of all this evil; for a few transient thoughts will not affect the heart, and persuade to action; and do it presently, because, by every delay, your work will be the harder, your danger the greater, and your recovery the more difficult. Reflect upon the sinfulness as well as affliction of this case. Know that you have displeased God, and run from him, neglected his presence, and grieved his Spirit, and in what instances you have done so, that hath made him weary of his dwelling; what ordinances you have slighted; what duties you have omitted; what sins you have given way to; in order to repentance and deep humiliation.

Can you contentedly sit still with this dismal state of things, while God hath somewhat (yea, a great deal indeed) against you for having left your first love? Will you not endeavour to remove that which hath made such a separation between God

and you, and brought you thus low? What communion with God, what communication of his grace, what influences of his Spirit, and evidences of his favour, have you lost! And will you not acknowledge your iniquity, and abase yourselves in the dust, and return to the Lord, and do your first works, that he may heal your backslidings, and receive you graciously? that you may again take hold of his covenant, and be at peace with him?

But to be at peace with God is not the whole of your concern; you need not only a pardon, but a physician to heal you; as doth a malefactor, that is not only liable in the law, but desperately sick. Your state is sinful and dangerous, as well as troublesome. From performing duties in such a manner as you now do, you may quickly be tempted to let them altogether alone. God may be so far provoked to suffer Satan to make attempts upon you of that kind, (and he is forward enough to make use of such an opportunity, to try all his snares and stratagems against you,) till he prevail with you to think hardly of God himself, unthankfully to overlook all his former kindnesses, to put the worst interpretation that can be upon all his providences, to distrust and quarrel with him, as if his faithfulness had failed, and his mercy were clean gone for ever, and there were no hope left for one in your case; and so run into desperation, and, through the subtlety and violence of Satan's temptations, try the most foolish and unlawful means for ease and cure; either open licentiousness, or it may be, self-murder.

Therefore, speedy, present repentance is necessary

especially which conscience tells you you have most indulged, from whence your distress doth principally arise, confessing your sin freely, fully, and without reserve, and waiting on God in the diligent use of all means, for the recovery of that which you have lost, and justifying God in his righteousness, truth, wisdom, holiness, in all his rebukes, that you may regain a spirit of prayer, and taste the sweetness, virtue, and efficacy, of every duty, and of every ordinance; and God may give you "the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and the joy of the Lord may be your strength," for future service and suffering.

In the mean time, do not cast away your hope, but, though you have, too justly, deprived yourself of the faith of assurance, yet endeavour to maintain and exercise the faith of adherence; say unto God, that, because there is forgiveness with him, therefore he is to be feared. My sin is not too great to be forgiven; it is not the unpardonable sin; for I desire to repent, and resolve to return. I will still cleave to the Lord and wait upon him, and follow hard after him, and take no other course for deliverance and comfort. Mine is not a single case; I am not the only soul that hath been so distressed, and yet found relief by seeking unto God. It is therefore "good for me to hope, and quietly wait, for the salvation of God." I will draw near to God; I will lie at his foot, and continue in all ways of worship and duty, wherein I may hope to meet with the quickening and comfort of his Spirit: I will seek relief from no other; I will keep as near him as I can; whither else shall I go? "He alone hath the words of eternal life;" he alone can create (what is the fruit of his own lips) peace.

I will encourage myself in the consideration of his general grace, and the probabilities of his special love; I will recollect my former experiences, when I had some good hope through grace concerning my adoption; "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." If God will give me so much grace as to continue waiting, I will hope still; and, "though I walk in darkness, and see little or no light, I will stay myself on the Lord;" and if, by the want of sensible consolation, he will make me more humble, and keep me in a greater submission to his will, I will bless his holy name, and derive more comfortable hope from thence, than from the most sweet and sensible consolations I ever had; and look upon humility, self-denial, dependence on God, resignation to him, and hatred of sin as a better sign of his love, than the highest fervours of affection in his service can be.

Oh! that I had formerly done as much for holiness as I have for comfort! By the enjoyment of the one, I should have had more of the other: the exercise of grace would have discovered the truth of it. Let me therefore accuse and condemn myself, but still trust and love God, and wait upon him. Let me resolve never to choose a new lord or master, or take up with any portion beneath God himself, or any way of hope or salvation but by Jesus Christ, my only Saviour; neither let me forsake the way of faith and holiness, for all the hopes and happiness of this world, if put to my choice; but be always

able to say, (blessed be God I now can,) that "I will return to my former husband, for then it was better with me than now." I had peace and refreshment in my former ways, I will return to them. "Lord, forsake me not utterly! keep not thine anger for ever; cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, that my heart may be enlarged, to praise thy name, and to run the way of thy commandments."

SECTION XXVI.

Confession of sin, humiliation, and repentance, must follow upon self-examination. Advice concerning repentance of some particular backsliding. The great perplexity and distress of a penitent sinner represented, as a caution against returning to folly.

That we may turn unto the Lord, is the end of searching and trying our ways. Lord! I have been searching my heart, and considering my ways, but can find little or no good; neither can I discover all that is evil in both. But I find enough to make my own heart condemn me, and thou (who art greater than my heart, and knowest all things) mayest much more condemn me. I am altogether unclean, polluted, and abominable.

If I go about to enumerate the sins of my thoughts, words, and actions, in all the periods of my life

hitherto; if I consider my omissions of duty, and daily crimes, by actual commission; if I reflect upon my sins according to their respective objects, as either against thee, O God, and against my neighbour, and against my own soul or body; and compare my heart and life with thy strict and holy law, and think in how many instances I have transgressed every of thy righteous commandments, I find they are more than the hairs of my head; they cannot be numbered. Who can tell how oft he hath offended? Many of my sins make little impression on my memory, I observe them not, I remember them not; but this hinders not but they may make deep impression on my conscience, which will one day be awake, and set them in order before me; and they are all written in thy book of remembrance, in order to my final judgment. All my sins are before thee; but thou requirest my humble confession of them, in order to repentance: and, as a part thereof, that I freely acknowledge their heinous aggravations, to shame and humble myself the more before thee, whom I have offended and provoked.

How long did I serve divers lusts and pleasures with the neglect and forgetfulness of God! How sad a prospect may I take of the far greater part of my life past! especially of my younger years, which have been trifled away in vanity and folly! And, since I have known the way of truth, how shamefully have I prevaricated with God! I am confounded to consider how often I have despised the commandment, and rebelled against the light, against the principles of education, the checks of conscience, frequent warnings from God, and reproofs from

others; contrary to my profession and experience, contrary to the obligation of peculiar mercies, solemn promises, resolutions, and engagements, and a nearer relation to God than many others; which sins have more dishonoured my Lord, discredited his holy gospel, gratified the devil, scandalized the world, and strengthened the hands of the ungodly, than the sins of others. And, alas! how much of my precious time is thus gone, which, if duly improved, would now afford me comfort to review!

How much guilt have I contracted every year, particularly in this last! I now begin another, which will soon be gone, as that which was concluded yesterday. And shall I only advance in age, to increase the number of my sins, and heighten my account against the day of reckoning? In temporal and civil affairs, "day unto day uttereth knowledge, and night unto night teacheth wisdom." We are taught by experience many useful lessons, which we should not else have learned; to reform many errors and mistakes, to correct many rash and foolish actions, and speeches, &c. And shall I not learn wisdom by the experience of another year, in what concerns my greatest, my eternal interest? Shall not the reflection on my past sins prevent my com-mission of the like? especially, considering how my sins are aggravated by every mercy I have received; by every affliction I have undergone; every awakening sermon I have heard; every motion of God's Spirit, and every check of my own conscience, that I have resisted; every offer of his grace; every warning of his providence; every invitation and call of his word; every purpose to repent, and every re-

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solution I have made to forsake sin: the greater knowledge I have had of my danger, the longer time. I have deliberated about it; the oftener I have confessed my sin, and been sorry for it; every reproof I have had from others, and every promise I have made myself, doth aggravate and increase my guilt.

How many years hath God vouchsafed me to work out my salvation! but how little have I done towards it! Had I died this last year, how unprepared must I have made my appearance before his tribunal! What opportunities of doing and receiving good have I let slip! Have I not made it more my business to seem religious, than really to be so? How much of the patience of God have I abused? Refusing his calls to repentance, resisting the strivings of his Spirit, smothering my convictions, and turning the grace of God into wantonness? Instead of returning gratitude for all his love, I have repeated my transgressions after forgiveness, and gone in a circle of repenting and sinning, even to this day. Lord, I am ashamed, and lay myself in the dust before thee. To me belongs nothing but shame and confusion of face. If God should condemn and punish me as a rebel and a traitor, and give me the portion of hypocrites, I cannot but own his justice; even in hell I must do it with my flaming tongue and breath.

O spare me for thy mercy's sake! "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no flesh living be justified, if thou layest judgment to the line, and equity to the plummet." Give me repentance unto life, never to be repented of, never to be retracted again. Bring

me to the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin. Behold the sighing of a contrite spirit; for "I acknowledge my transgressions unto thee, against whom I have sinned: O Lord, forgive the iniquity of my sin." I am unworthy to lift up my hands and eyes towards heaven, unworthy to be called thy son or thy servant: I am vile in mine own eyes, because I have made myself vile in thine. For this I am troubled, and mourn, and my soul is grieved within me.

O thou heavenly physician of souls! from thy pity alone I expect my cure. I am miserable and undone without thy compassion, and expect no relief but from the treasure of thy grace. I must perish and sink under the burden of sin, if thy merciful hand do not save me, and lift me up. I am entangled and ensnared by the devil and my lusts, and, without thy succour, can never hope to get free. "O Lord, forgive my sins, and heal my soul; deliver and save me for thy mercies' sake."

May I not yet hope in thy mercy? Thou hast mercifully borne with me hitherto, thou callest me to repent, thou commandest me to return, and promisest to forgive those sins which are confessed and forsaken: O do not cast me out of thy sight and presence, now that I desire, from the bottom of my heart, to return to thee! I abhor myself in dust and ashes for my past iniquities. But, alas! such is the hardness of my impenitent heart, that I am even ashamed of my humblest repentance: how much more may God despise and reject it! But hast thou not given thy blessed Son to die for sinners? and exalted him for this very end, to be a "Prince and a Saviour, to

give repentance and remission of sins?" And, by the word of thy grace, thou beseechest all, even the greatest sinners, to accept of mercy; and art more willing to pardon, than we can be to repent. It is thy delight and glory, agreeable to thy nature and declared name, "as a God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." O pardon mine iniquity, for it is great; and receive an humble penitent, who implores thy grace, according to the tenor of thy new covenant, flying to the arms of thy mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, "who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

Lord, hear my prayer, and let not the mixture of my weaknesses and unworthiness turn it into sin; but graciously vouchsafe to look upon a returning prodigal, and cause me to hear the voice of joy and gladness, that my sorrowful heart may be comforted, and my life be directed to thy praise. Lead me into the path of life, that I may no longer err from the way of thy commandments; teach me to do thy will, O God, and write thy law upon my heart, that I may never more return to folly. I am convinced of the evil of sin, and of thy right to govern me, of the equity and justice of thy law, of the sweetness and rewards of keeping thy precepts: O sanctify my heart, and make me sound in thy statutes, that I may hate every false way, and be devoted to thy fear, the remainder of my life.

If there be any particular lust, or wickedness, which, through the power of temptation, and the deceitfulness of sin, you have fallen into, that hath

wasted conscience, and robbed you of your peace, and provoked God to write bitter things against you, be sure to humble yourself, without delay, in an especial manner, for that backsliding; confess it freely with its aggravations. Consider whether it was not after some special manifestation of God's love, after some special warning, some strong conviction, under, or soon after, some great affliction from God, or some more than ordinary kindness of his providence, &c. and impress such thoughts, to humble yourself the lower. Search into the grounds and causes of such apostacy; such as the abatement of your watchfulness, the neglect of serious closet devotion, making bold with temptation, too great compliance with vain company, venturing too far in lawful or indifferent things, too much confidence in your own wisdom, strength, and steadfastness, not fearing sufficiently the approaches and beginnings of sin, or avoiding the fuel, incentives, and occasions of Palliate and disguise nothing that may make your sin exceeding sinful, lest, by some little art of the devil, you deceive yourself by a halfrepentance; and the evil spirit you think to be cast out return again with seven worse than himself, and so your latter end be worse than your beginning. For, if the sin be not truly hated, but only covered over with penitential ashes, it will quickly flame out again, when it meets with combustible matter, and a strong blast of temptation.

But, if you be grieved to the very heart, and abhor the sin, and resolve to quit it, you need not doubt of God's readiness to receive you to mercy. His Spirit is yet striving with you, if you are willing to repent and return to God. He sought you, and called you to return, when you were wandering, as a lost sheep, in the broad way; and can you think he will not be found by you, if you seek him with your whole heart? Therefore, renew your repentance, and beg more earnestly a spirit of humility, holy fear, and watchfulness: and, every morning, implore divine succours against that sin, and all temptations to it, which, as much as possible, you must avoid. Constant and fervent prayer, after repentance, must be your refuge and your remedy. If you let fall your hands, this Amalek will prevail again. As soon and as far as you fail in the constancy and fervency of that duty, your sin will get strength, and successfully attempt you another time. But, by this practice, God may turn evil to work for good, make you gain by your loss, stand the faster by your falls, and become stronger by the discovery of your weakness, and so be better established for the future.

But take heed that you pervert not the grace of God, and encourage yourself to sin again, by the supposition, that, if you should fall, it is but to repent, and renew your resolutions, and all will be well. This is a subtle artifice of Satan, but such, methinks, as should take with none, who have ever known, by experience, what it is to repent; who have felt the burden of sin to be heavier than a mill-stone, than the weight of a mountain; who have tasted how evil and bitter a thing it is to depart from God, who have loathed and abhorred themselves with deep remorse, and sorrow, and anguish of spirit, wishing, with all their hearts, that they had

not sinned; and, if it were in their power, would give all the world to retrieve it; and would rather die, than commit that folly again they then repented of. Let those, who have not their own experience to confirm this, read over (and consider the case of David when he wrote) the penitential psalms. How many, like him, have roared and cried out, under the sense of sin, of stings and furies in their conscience, of the poisoned arrows in their souls, and his terrors surrounding them wherever they went; from the sense of his sin's malignity, the apprehensions of God's anger, and the consequent fears of his wrath! Serious repentance, after great transgressions, is another thing than most imagine it: when their aggravated sins shall beset them behind and before, be placed in order before their eyes, and set in array against them. It is always a work of difficulty, as well as importance, to crucify corrupt affections, to tear a beloved lust from the heart, with self-indignation to abhor and cast away what before you loved and delighted in. How did David's sin stare him in the face? "It is continually with me, it is ever before me," said he. It haunted him like a spectre, or, like Belshazzar's handwriting on the wall, it still appeared before him in some horrid shape.

However sin may smile in its first address, and bespeak us in flattering language, and promise pleasure, and profit, and great advantages, and satisfaction; these are but fair appearances, this is but the outside of the cup, and the colour of the liquor; it will prove gall and wormwood, and a mixture of deadly poison, if ever God set it home upon the conscience, and awaken us to a true sense of it: and the

continuance of daily repentance for sin, which all Christians are called to, is no such easy matter neither. Constant self-abasement and humiliation before God, from a sense of his majesty and holiness, and of our many sins and pollution thereby; the imperfection of our best duties continually to be bewailed; inordinate affections to be still mortified; always resisting and opposing sin in its root and branches; conflicting against the whole interest of the flesh, the world, and the devil; seeking after more holiness, to be derived unto us by the grace of Christ, to be wrought in us by his Spirit, and maintained by his power; and making daily applications to the fountain of all grace for spiritual strength to continue our warfare against sin, in all instances of outward duty, and inward actings of grace, even as long as we live; all this is included in it. Due apprehensions concerning repentance, as so comprehensive and difficult a duty, would teach us to beware of sin.

SECTION XXVII.

The necessity of Christian resolution to upright, persevering obedience; how full and extensive it ought to be, and yet humble; by what means we may be assisted to perform that which we resolve.

HAVING acknowledged my transgressions unto God, and begged forgiveness, and experimentally learned the evil of sin, by the bitterness of repent-

ance, I resolve, for the future, to watch against it more narrowly, and against every thing that leads to it: endeavouring to please and honour my God and Saviour, by an upright, obedient, heart and life. And, for the remission of my former contracted guilt, I trust to Jesus Christ, according to the revelation, made in the gospel, of what he is, hath done and suffered, and continues to do in heaven, for the salvation of repenting sinners, who desire to come unto God by him.

But how often, O my soul! have I mocked God, and deceived myself with formal and faint purposes of amendment! My good resolutions have been all of them "as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which quickly passed away." One fresh assault of temptation hath swept away all my good purposes as a spider's web. I have falsified so many, and broken my word so often, that I dare not trust to any thing I now resolve, or rely on any promises I should farther make. Succour me, therefore, O Lord, by thy powerful grace, that what was defective in my former fruitless resolutions may be now rectified. Let me be more humble in the sense of my weakness, more dependent on thy grace, and more heartily seek it, from time to time. Strengthen me with strength in my soul, with might and power in my inward man, that I may so resolve and purpose as to perform; that I may not be one day hot and the next cold; zealous in the beginning, but faint and lukewarm in the progress; fervent and serious only in resolving, but weak and impotent in the execution.

Having changed my master, my end, and my hopes, by returning unto God, from whom I had

gone astray, I firmly resolve, through the assistance of his grace, to change my course of life; that, "old things being done away, all things may become new;" that, "being made free from sin," by pardoning mercy, "and become the servant of Christ, I may have my fruit unto holiness, that my end may be eternal life." In the interim, whether I live or die, let it be unto the Lord, resolving, both in life and death, to be absolutely his. And, to that purpose, O my soul! let me seek for continual supplies of grace from Christ my head, to enable me to yield ready obedience in the most difficult, hazardous, painful, and humbling duties. In vain do I resolve it, without the assistance of his mighty power, to strengthen my heart and hands, whenever I am called to such a trial of my sincerity. Without it I shall never recover my liberty, or break asunder those bands and cords, wherewith I have formerly been held captive, as the servant of sin and Satan. Such are the weakness and treachery of my own heart, the influence of ill examples, and the subtlety and cunning of the tempter, that otherwise I shall quickly change my mind, and return to folly as the dog to his vomit. The spirit is so weak, and the flesh so frail; the snares of the world so many, the power of remaining corruption so strong; and of myself I am so unsettled and wavering, fickle and unsteady, and prone to backsliding, that all my strongest purposes will not be sufficient, without daily strength from above. My senses are so deceitful; my passions so ungovernable; the rule and law I am to walk by, so strict, and spiritual, and extensive; criminal omissions may be so frequent, and so

easily overlooked; so many several and difficult duties are to be performed; and, by every change of my condition, or of God's providence, so many new dangers and new duties may arise; that I fear the issue of my firmest resolutions. So strict a watch must always be kept; such humility and caution are every where to be practised; such speedy repentance required after every fall; with thankfulness and contentment in every state, under all calamities, be they ever so many, or ever so pinching; and perseverance, herein absolutely necessary, though ever so many stratagems be used to discourage me from proceeding, or to entice me to go back, or turn aside to some other path; insomuch that, if God had not promised me his continued presence, and that his grace shall be sufficient for me, and that I shall not be tempted above what I am able to bear, I should utterly despair of making good what I now resolve.

But, besides these promises to encourage my resolved obedience, he hath left upon record, in his word, many glorious examples of his assisting and rewarding the courage and resolution of his servants to continue faithful; as in the case of Joseph, Daniel, and his three friends, &c. If Christ stand by and strengthen me, I know I shall be able to do all things; I shall not then be flattered or affrighted out of the way of my duty; no wind that can blow shall then turn me to another point; nothing shall then be able to prevail for my consent to a wilful and deliberate forsaking of God; no argument, no temptation; though privacy, opportunity, impunity from men, with rewards of worldly gain and honour, should all concur to enforce a temptation. But, by

that heavenly assistance, I shall be preserved humble, temperate, chaste, patient, thankful, self-denying, crucified to the world, and hold fast my integrity till I die; still perfecting holiness in the fear of God, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; waxing stronger from day to day, be seldomer surprised, offend less, repent more quickly, and watch more narrowly afterwards, till at last I receive the crown.

Especially, let me watch against my constitutional sins, such as I am most inclined to, and where a temptation doth most easily enter; where the devil can take the fastest hold, and be least suspected; where he hath formerly sprung a mine and made a breach. I have known some humble watchful Christians, after being recovered from their backslidings, who abhorred every temptation to that sin by which they had been defiled and wounded; they can hardly put up a prayer, but they mention it; hardly have their hearts affected in any ordinance, but they are inwardly ashamed of it; hardly hear of any one guilty of the like, but they are ready to burst out into tears.

Fix, therefore, I beseech thee, most gracious God! my unfeigned resolutions of cleaving to thee with full purpose of heart, and show thy strength in my weakness, by enabling me to do what I now resolve! To that end, teach me to watch over my heart, to keep it with all diligence, to be more conversant with my own thoughts, examine the motions that arise in my heart, whence they come, and whither they go, and what they tend to, that I may suppress the beginnings of sin. The unsearchable deceitful-

ness of the heart, the rovings, stragglings, and wanderings, of the thoughts, the ungovernable motions and stirrings of the passions and affections, with the corrupt inclinations that are ready to comply with temptation, make such a constant watchfulness necessary. Let me live no longer as a stranger to myself, but by self-reflection dwell more at home, reckoning my principle work to be within doors, to keep my own vineyard. Teach me to watch over my senses, to guard the door of my lips, to govern my passions; to be wary in the choice of my company, and in the right use of it; to be circumspect in every step of my daily walk, to call myself frequently to a reckoning, to cast up my accounts at the foot of every page, (by every day's review of my actions,) to live always as in God's presence, and be awed every where by the thought of his holy eye, to shun the occasions and appearances of evil, &c.

By a neglect of this, spiritual distempers will insensibly creep upon us. There is such a venom, and malignity, in sin, to wound and weaken the soul, to put us off the hinges, to disorder and unfit us for any spiritual service, to make our hearts vain and frothy, lazy and listless, that we shall easily let slip our opportunities, lose our seasons, and languish and pine away, notwithstanding all the means of thriving and growth. And hence it is, that so many professors mourn and complain, lick the dust, and lie among the clods, are dead under the most awakening ministry, and barren under the most fruitful means. Hence it is they do little good, as well as taste little comfort; some duties are neglected, and others performed slightly; and in none of them do they meet

with that sweetness and satisfaction, that refreshment and advantage, fruit and benefit, as formerly. And all from the neglect of watchfulness, making bold with temptation, and not standing upon their guard in the use of their Christian armour.

And, because no place, no condition, no employment, is exempted from temptations, let me fortify myself every morning, against all assaults for that day, by serious prayer, as holy David was wont to " My voice (saith he) shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Let the law of God be my daily and delightful study, that I may be able presently to bring my words and actions to the touchstone; and know how to manage the sword of the Spirit, on all occasions, against the fiery "darts of the devil;" that, knowing the rule, I may not be doubtful, or at a loss: whenever I am tempted, I may not make a stand to parley, but immediately summon all my forces to resist and reject the snare; being assured from God, that the continuance of this warfare shall end in a most glorious victory. "" He will shortly tread down Satan under my feet. Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord."

SECTION XXVIII.

The import and obligation of our baptismal covenant. The renewal of it, by a solemn dedication of ourselves to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, exemplified and recommended.

ALL this, O my soul! which I have now resolved on, is no more than what I am obliged to by my vow in baptism, to renounce the devil and his works, the flesh and the lusts thereof, the world, and conformity to it, that I may love and serve the Lord, agreeably to the undoubted right which God hath in me by creation, redemption, and his innumerable other benefits: but the "outward washing of baptism," and a visible profession of obedience, will not save me, "without the answer of a good conscience towards God." May I not, by the consideration of my baptismal covenant, suppose God speaking to my conscience to this effect? 'Will you take me for your whole portion and felicity; and my law for the constant rule of your obedience; and fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, to your life's end? Will you believe in Jesus Christ, and receive him as a Prince and Saviour; and adhere to the faith and obedience of the gospel, how hazardous and difficult soever the profession and practice of it may be? Will you receive the blessed Spirit as your teacher, sanctifier, and comforter; and cherish all his motions, to enlighten, purify, confirm, comfort, and assist you?' It is my hearty consent to these terms, and resolved compliance with them, which baptism obligeth to; and this is "the answer of a good conscience towards God."

I have often renewed this covenant on several occasions; but did I ever duly consider the tenor and obligations of it? How have I lied unto the God of truth! .Dealt deceitfully with him! And been false and fickle, treacherous and unfaithful, to what I promised! O let me now again repeat it, and give up myself once more to be the Lord's, more unfeignedly, more firmly, than ever I have hitherto done; that the bonds of God upon me may be strengthened, and my soul more thoroughly engaged to be the Lord's! O help me to do it with the greatest seriousness, as the most important affair of my whole life! By thine aid and grace alone, shall I be sincere and cordial in this surrender and dedication of myself. O breathe upon my soul, most Holy Spirit, ("the power of the Highest,") that there may be no hypocrisy or reservation in this so weighty and solemn transaction between God and me!

O most blessed and glorious TRINITY! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thy favour is my life, and thy loving-kindness is better than life; thy will should have been my rule, thy word my law, thy glory my end, to please thee my principal business, and, to enjoy thy love and presence, my ultimate felicity: but I am one of thy revolted creatures, who have lost thine image, and rebelled against thy law; slighted thy authority, and rejected thy grace; and deserve to be cast out of thy sight, and banished from thy presence for ever. Nevertheless, O most

merciful God and Father, upon thy gracious invita-tion and call, I now return to thee, my rightful Lord; acknowledging thee as my almighty, wise, and bountiful Creator, my absolute owner, my righteous governor, my end, my happiness, my chief good. I now accept thine offered mercy; I now submit to the sceptre of thy grace; and give up myself to thee, as my king, and my God, to rule and sanctify me now, and be my everlasting portion. I desire no longer to be my own, but thine, to whom of right I belong, and ought to be devoted. I yield myself to thee, O my Lord! Accept and possess that which is thine own. I lay myself at thy foot, at all times, and in all conditions, to be at thy disposal, and in everything to acquiesce in thy good pleasure. Deliberately resolving, with unfeigned and free consent of my will, to walk before thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life, hereby I consecrate and devote myself to be thy perpetual, avowed servant. "Lord, I am thy servant, I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid." Though other lords have had dominion over me, I will now make mention of thy name, and of thy righteousness, only, by Jesus Christ.

O blessed Jesus, my all-sufficient Saviour! thy dying love, infinite condescension, and matchless grace, have at last overcome me, and constrained me to resolve to be wholly thine, who hast redeemed and bought me with thy most precious blood. I now acknowledge and own thee, as my Lord and my Jesus, my prophet, priest, and king; my sacrifice, surety, and ransom, to satisfy for my sins, and reconcile me unto God; to instruct me in his will, and

teach me the mysteries of his kingdom, and the way to the Father. How often hast thou opened thine arms, and called me, yea, beseeched me, to come unto thee, and accept of life! But I refused to come. I adore thy merciful condescension, that yet thou wilt receive me on such easy terms.

O thou Lord of life and glory, now accept of an unworthy helpless sinner, who flies to thee as his only refuge and hope! who is convinced that none but Christ, none but Christ, can make his peace with God, and save from wrath to come. I acknowledge thy title to me, and my obedience, and to all I have, by dying for me. I desire to take thy yoke upon me, for it is easy, and thy burden, which is light. I desire to be entirely, and for ever thine, "in an everlasting covenant," never to be broken; to take up the cross and follow thee, whithersoever thou shalt lead me, through the strait gate, and the narrow way. I will reserve no lust, refuse no labour, grudge no sufferings, stick at no difficulty, so I may please and honour thee, and continue in thy love. O shed abroad more of thy love in my heart, to make all things easy for his sake, "who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in his own blood."

O God the Holy Ghost! I acknowledge thee, as my great teacher and sanctifier, and give up myself to thee, as the author of all saving knowledge and holiness: by thee I have been convinced of my sin against the law of God, and the gospel of Christ, and of my necessity of his merit, satisfaction, and righteousness, to justify my guilty soul, by procuring the forgiveness of sin, and my acceptance with God;

and of the freeness of his love, the riches and allsufficiency of his grace, towards all who come unto God by him. I adore thee, O most blessed Spirit! as proceeding and sent from the Father and the Son, to renew all the powers of my soul, and restore the divine image there; to enlighten my mind, to know and receive the truth, "as it is in Jesus," and purify my heart; and to sanctify all the members of my body, and make them instruments of righteousness unto holiness, which before were servants unto sin; and gradually to deliver me from the power, the defilement, and abode of sin; as from the guilt and punishment by the blood of Jesus; and as the witness of God to the truth of the Holy Scriptures; and as the greatest paraclete, to comfort and establish the hearts of believers, sealing them up to the day of redemption, and giving them the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. O blessed Spirit, be thou my witness, that, though I have violated the law of God, and defaced his image, and formerly undervalued the love of Christ, and the grace of the gospel, yet, by thine aid, I now accept what I have so long neglected, and thankfully devote myself henceforward to be the Lord's, in a covenant relation.

But, fearing and distrusting myself, I give up myself entirely to the conduct of thy grace, depending upon it for my establishment and perseverance. O form my heart into an obediential frame, that, in every thing, I may endeavour to answer the ends and obligations of this devoted state.

To this one God I have once again dedicated and resigned myself; to serve, and please, and honour

thee, in thought, word, and act, to the last moment of my life; in the performance of all duties, even those which I have been most averse from; in the mortification of every lust, and the forsaking every sin, even those which I was once most addicted to; resolving deliberately to allow myself in nothing, great or little, secret or open, which I shall know or believe to be contrary to thy holy will; making it my business to be fruitful in good works, to the praise of my Redeemer; waiting, in the use of all his appointed means, for higher measures of grace and holiness, to be more victorious over inward lusts, and outward temptations, still "pressing towards the mark for the prize of my high and holy calling," even eternal life.

I call heaven and earth, O Lord, to witness this day that I own and avow this to be my mind, and the settled, prevailing purpose of my soul. This I again ratify and confirm, without any clauses or exceptions. So help me, O my God. Glory be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit!

SECTION XXIX.

Practical and consolatory reflections on the preceding self-dedication or covenant with God.

I HAVE this day solemnly avouched the Lord to be my God, to walk in his ways; thereby to fortify my resolutions, that "I and my house (and all that

I can persuade to be of my mind) will serve the Lord." I intend, desire, and hope, never wilfully to violate the faith which I have now plighted in the presence of God; but to continue "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," &c.

Should I undertake any new employment, or enter into any new condition, or change the place of my abode, where I might see more of God's dishonour, and meet with more and stronger temptations to sin, and be called to the performance of more difficult duties, greater watchfulness, and self-denial, &c., I would hope thereby to engage the presence of God with me, and his blessing on all my affairs (on which depends the success of all that I undertake); and would hope the better to preserve my integrity, not only this year, but in all the remaining portion of my time, by the abiding sense of my covenant with God, thus seriously renewed.

This is the method I have been often advised to, for peace of conscience, under doubts and scruples concerning my spiritual state; to put the matter out of doubt, by again accepting the offered mercy and grace of the gospel, and heartily consenting to the new covenant; giving up myself to God in Christ, to be ruled and saved by him. Blessed be God, I have now done so. Lord, say Amen to thy part of the covenant, that thou art and wilt be my God; as I desire unfeignedly to do to mine, that I will be thy servant.

But, because articles are sooner consented to than made good, though I seriously intend never to disown this my solemn act and deed, but firmly to ad-

here to it, as long as I live, that, having sworn, I will endeavour to perform it, that this shall be my everlasting choice, never to be recanted or altered; yet, considering the sad instances of my former weakness, and the vigilance and subtle malice of my great adversary, I again implore the succour of divine grace, to keep it for ever in the purpose of my heart, that it may be, as the laws of the Medes and Persians, never to be reversed. I have given up my name to be thine: "O put thy fear into my heart, that I may never depart from thee!" Imprint thy laws upon my heart, that my obedience may be uniform and universal, unwavering and perpetual; suitable to so honourable and near a relation to thee! I am sensible I want wisdom and strength to that purpose, but thou hast bid me ask it of thee, "who givest liberally to all," without desert, and "upbraidest not" with present unworthiness or former faults. "O lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil." Stand by and strengthen me in the hour of trial, lest I forget my vows, and deny thee. O that my soul may never draw back, lest thine have no pleasure in me! I can serve no better master: O let mine ears be bored to the door of thine house, as the token and assurance of my being thy servant unto death! I know it is my duty, I am sensible it is my privilege and honour; I am convinced that it is my interest and felicity; my soul, my life, my present and everlasting welfare, and all, depend upon it, that thou shouldest be my God for ever. O conduct me by thy Holy Spirit of grace, that I may walk, and act, as having heartily consented he should be so; and "direct my heart into

thy love, and the faithful keeping of thy commandments;" that, when so many professors make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and discredit the religion of my Lord, by their shameful falls, thou mayest make me to stand, and improve the warning of their examples to walk humbly; and, "while I stand, to take heed lest I fall."

Having thus surrendered myself to God, what is there, O my soul! that is ever like to prevail with me to go back, and revolt from him? Is the gratification of a lust, the securing of an estate, compliance with a friend, the pleasing of a superior, living in ease, and honour, and outward prosperity, for a little while, the saving my body from suffering, or my life from violence, or whatsoever else be the motive of my unfaithfulness to God, and apostacy from him; is any, is all, of these any way considerable, compared with the blessedness of having God to be my God? For thereby I have the forgiveness of all my sins, and the assurance of his favour; the certainty of present protection and provision; all creatures reconciled to me, and to be employed for my good, as the friend of God; all things to work together for my advantage, and, by the evidence of my adoption, a well-grounded hope of eternal life. "God, as my sun and shield, will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing." So unspeakably comprehensive are the privileges of so near a relation to God in Christ. "O happy are the people who are in such a case! Blessed are the persons whose God is the Lord !"

Do I resolve to abide by my choice, and trust in Christ for persevering grace? And shall I not,

ought I not, to take comfort in it? Shall I not give God the glory of his infinite goodness, by adhering to him, and rejoicing in him, notwithstanding all temptations to the contrary? Casting all my care upon him, and quieting myself in the all-sufficiency of my heavenly Father, having a God in covenant, who will supply all my wants, and take care of me, as his own! Shall I not give him the glory of his truth and power, by trusting him in every condition? By confidence in his promise, dependence on his word, faithfulness to his interest, and constancy in his service to the end? Is it not a most encouraging thought, that God doth never abandon any who do not first forsake him? And, after such strict engagements as I have laid upon myself, shall I ever strike the fatal stroke with my own hand? Shall I be off and on, say and unsay, promise and retract? And, after I have proceeded thus far, shall I forsake the fountain of living waters, and turn again to broken cisterns?

After I have examined myself, considered my ways, confessed my sins, and, upon serious deliberation, am come to a resolve, and, in pursuance of it, have devoted myself with such solemnity to be the Lord's, shall I ever, after this, "forsake him and my own mercies, and lightly esteem the rock of my salvation?" Now I have learned, in some measure, what sin is, by the sorrows and anguish of a hearty repentance; now I have discovered so much of the snares and devices of Satan, whereby I have formerly been betrayed; now I am sensible of the dangerous and powerful influence and infection of bad company; the treachery of fleshly lusts; the bewitching temp-

tations of the world; and have tasted a little, by my own experience, of the pleasantness of wisdom's paths; the peace and satisfaction of devotedness to God, by the present rewards of a calm conscience, the communications of divine grace, and the encouragement of a holy hope, &c. and am persuaded of the stability of his word, and the certainty of eternal life to all who continue in well-doing. Shall I, after all this, ever break with God again? Shall I ever cancel this engagement; violate this my vow; and falsify so many repeated promises and resolutions?

Oh that his power may rest upon me! and his grace work in me, both to will and to do! "that this God may be my God for ever, and my guide unto death!" Let me never re-assume this gift and surrender of myself, or defraud God of his right and property. His I am, and him I will serve, living wholly to him; using all I have for him; being willing he should do what he list with his own, and consequently dispose of me, and of all that any way belongs to me, as shall seem good in his eyes. I am thine, O Lord: save me. Command me my work, appoint me my duty, direct my station, order my condition. Let me be thine, though employed in the meanest service, and the most laborious selfdenying work. Though I should be but a doorkeeper in thine house, a hewer of wood, or a drawer of water; though I must pinch in the flesh, and swim against the tide, and renounce what before I valued; yet "this God shall be my God for ever."

By these means, when I come to die, (if God should add more years to the little number I have passed, besides this I have now begun,) I may be able

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to say, with upright Hezekiah, "Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in mine integrity;" that, in the face of death and the grave, in the view of another world, and the near prospect of eternity, I may be able to rejoice in hope, and say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thou art my Saviour, and I have waited for thy salvation. I have sought thee with my whole heart; I have chosen thy favour rather than worldly grandeur and prosperity; I have prized thy love, and endeavoured to obey thee, (as the best expression of my own,) though with many imperfections, which I bewail; I have delighted more in thy service and presence than in the pleasures of sin and vanity; thy testimonies have been the joy of my heart; I took no delight in the company of the ungodly, after I was devoted to thee; O let me not have my portion with them in the other world! fortify me now against the king of terrors, strengthen me in this my last conflict, enable me to triumph over death by the cross of Christ, (my victorious Redeemer,) and carry me through the dark valley at the divorce of soul and body, and grant me an abundant entrance into thine heavenly kingdom; let me be numbered among thy chosen, and my body wait in hope, till the general resurrection, that I may then see thy glory, and dwell with thee for ever!

I gave up myself to thee, and do not repent my choice; acknowledge me now for thine, and do not lose that which is thy own. Lord Jesus! thou hast paid my ransom, to deliver me from Satan, and from eternal wrath: Oh do not now reject me and cast me off. Is it not thine office and covenant to save

those that trust in thee? Oh remember thy word unto thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope, when I ventured my salvation on thy promise, and trusted to thy gracious word for eternal life. Thy love hath already overcome the greatest impediments of my salvation. It is as easy now to receive me as to love me. Thou hast prepared glory for thy redeemed ones, and hast bid me believingly to follow thee, and wait for thy salvation. Thou hast begotten me to a lively hope, by the incorruptible seed of the word: let me not now be deprived of the inheritance. Can that love, that pitied me in my blood, and fetched me from the gates of hell, now suffer me to fall into it? O crown thy grace, and perfect thy preparatory mercy, with everlasting mercy.

By voluntary consent and choice, thou art my God, and thy presence in heaven my ultimate felicity; I have trusted to thy gracious promise to prepare me for it, and bring me to it; "O fulfil thy word unto thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope;" and mercifully receive my departing soul, that seeks thee, that loves thee, that breathes after thee, and desires nothing but to know thee better, and love thee more, and be more entirely conformed to thine image, and live always in thy blessed presence. Thou hast called me out of the world, placed thine image upon me, enabled me to make it my business, though with many imperfections, to serve, and please, and honour thee; O receive me to the fulness of thy love and grace, and present me faultless before the presence of thy glory, with exceeding joy: Amen. Holy Father, be it unto me according to thy word, through the merits and intercession of my all-sufficient Saviour, Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness, in whom all thy promises are yea and amen.

SECTION XXX.

Thanksgiving to God for his innumerable benefits and mercies, particularly in the year past; with some direction and advice concerning it.

How precious and delightful are the thoughts of thy benefits! "O Lord, how great is the sum of Should I count them, they are more in number than the stars. Shall I not observe and consider them, maintain a grateful sense of them, and publicly acknowledge them on all occasions? that I may "bless the Lord at all times, and his praise be continually in my mouth." More especially should I conclude and begin this year with solemn praises to my great benefactor and preserver. I ought to begin and close every day with it, thereby "to make the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice in God." Every year, every day, every hour, every moment, offers me an occasion to praise him; because he is every minute gracious, and hath been so ever since he gave me my being.

Almost one half of my time hath been spent in sleep, when I remember not God nor myself; yet doth he, who never slumbers nor sleeps, remember me in mercy, and watch over me for good; yea,

though in the other half, by day, I have forgotten him in a worse sense, by casting off his fear, and not remembering that his holy eye is upon me, yet hath he not forgotten to be gracious. Therefore, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving, and never forget his benefits. With which sacrifice he is better pleased, than with an ox, or bullock, that hath horns and hoofs."

He hath prolonged my life this last year, when so many others of his more useful servants have been removed by death, and given me farther time and space to repent, when multitudes have been surprised in their impenitence. Yea, it was he who formed me in the womb, and brought me safely into the world, by whose providence I have hitherto been supported: "In him I live, and move, and continually exist;" to this undeserved goodness I am beholden for all the good of any kind which I ever enjoyed; to his bounty I am indebted for all that I now have; and must depend upon it for whatever I can hereafter expect.

Through infancy and childhood he was pleased to preserve me; favouring me with many advantages in my birth and education; providing for me a competent livelihood; disposing the circumstances of my condition, relations, places of abode, &c. more advantageously than he hath done for thousands; affording me many helps for the improvement of my mind, and the increase of knowledge; and preventing my necessities, and even my desires, with numberless blessings, which I never so much as asked for. He hath caused several of my relations to

yield me comfort, when they might have been sore afflictions. He hath raised up strangers to befriend me, and show me kindness. How many favours have I received from God, by the instrumentality of other men, to whom God gave the will and the

power, the opportunity and the inclination!

How often hath he "delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my fect from falling," by seasonable preservations, so that I do yet "walk before him in the land of the living!" He hath rescued me from the brink of many a precipice, which, through ignorance or inadvertency, I did not apprehend nor fear. When I knew not which way to turn, he hath made my path plain. Under sinking disappointments he hath commanded succour, and been a "present help in the time of trouble." In great perplexities his eye hath been my guide, and his arm hath brought salvation; it may be by the ministry of his holy angels, obeying his order, and giving unusual intimations of very great, and otherwise unsuspected, dangers, or sending relief and deliverance by such small, unlikely, and unexpected means, as carried the name of God visibly engraven on them. Innumerable calamities he saves me from, which others groan under; and as many blessings am I favoured with, whereof they are destitute. He spreads my table, and fills my cup, and gives "me all things richly to enjoy," when many excellent persons, of whom the world is not worthy, are fed with "the bread of affliction and the water of affliction." Others have only necessaries, or but few conveniences, in comparison with the plentiful provisions God hath made for my cheerful obedience

to him. And shall I not praise him for "the precious things of heaven, the blessings of the earth,
the dew, and the deep?" and more especially for
the goodness of him who dwelt in the bush, to sanctify and sweeten all? whereby common mercies become the pledge and forerunner of better things; as
the fruit of his special kindness, the witness of his
truth, and the seed of peace, and joy, and righteousness, and praise; by reason of his blessing on all
that I possess, which otherwise would prove a snare,
and a temptation, and be intermixed with a curse.

And, besides the ordinary and continued bounty of every day, in the midst of how many difficulties and dangers have I felt the dear obligations of his preserving mercy, abroad and at home; in foreign countries as well as my own; in the midst of enemies, and among friends; in all places, and at all times!

He hath prolonged my health, or made my bed in sickness. He hath often granted the desires of my heart, whenever it was for his glory; and contradicted my wishes, and disappointed my endeavours, in other instances, when it was more to my advantage. From how many mischiefs hath he saved me, by such things as I deprecated, and would have hindered! How many evils hath he turned for good! "He hath heard my cry in the day of adversity, and set my feet in a large place." He hath chastened me for my profit; his rod and his staff have comforted me; he hath spoken comfortably to me in the wilderness. Affliction hath been useful and necessary physic, made an instrument of virtue, and so a token of his love. Therefore "I will sing

of the mercy of the Lord for ever, and, with the voice of thanksgiving, will I make known his faithfulness."

He hath all along conducted me by his wisdom, guided me by his providence, and the Angel of his presence hath directed my path, and ordered all my goings. He hath been a cloud to me by day, and a pillar of fire by night; he hath helped me in my straits, and supplied my wants, and comforted me in all my sadnesses; his powerful and gracious presence hath been my constant guard, and his sovereign, never-failing goodness hath compassed me about with mercy on every side. "For which," O most merciful Father, "my soul, and all that is within me, desires to speak thy praise."

The advantageous circumstances of many divine favours do raise their value, and deserve to be particularly observed and acknowledged. How suitably, how seasonably, how wisely, hath he conferred his benefits! With what tenderness and kindness! With what freedom and readiness! Of his own bounty and good-will, without any necessity or obligation on his part; without any desert, and sometimes without so much as a prayer, on mine! And, what is more, notwithstanding my ingratitude and forgetfulness of him, and great provocations, heightened by the abuse of so much mercy, demanding nothing, after all, in requital of so much kindness, but my acceptance of his love, and grateful sense of his goodness, and the sweetest and most reasonable expressions of it by thankful obedience.

More especially would I bless the Lord, for enlightening my mind in the great mysteries of reli-

gion; disposing, in wonderful wisdom, the several means and methods, whereby he brought me to the knowledge of the truth, by parents, ministers, friends, acquaintance, books, afflictions, &c. beginning with me in childhood, awakening and cultivating the inbred notions of God and natural religion, of good and evil, rewards and punishments, by the careful instructions of parents, or others concerned in my education; giving me the advantage of good examples, counsels, and encouragements, to know and do well, with more assistance, and less hinderances and diversions, than to many others: particularly for the excellent privilege, and inestimable blessing of his holy word and sacraments; the liberty of the Christian religion in the purity of it, in the most of those places, where God has been pleased to cast my lot. "Causing me to lie down in green pastures, and leading me beside the still waters;" instructing me in the revelation of his will and grace by Jesus Christ; acquainting me with the sublime principles and articles, precepts and rules, promises and hopes, of the gospel, in order to eternal life.

I bless thee, O Lord, and shall for ever do so, that, with any or all these advantages and helps, thy Holy Spirit hath taught me to know "the truth as it is in Jesus," heartily to believe and obey it. That, by thy grace, I have been convinced of sin, and brought to repentance; showing me the necessity of a Saviour, to make my peace with thee, the all-sufficiency of his grace, the fulness of his merit, the freeness of his love, and his readiness to receive me to mercy, inviting and calling me to it, and enabling me to accept his gracious invitation, and obey his

compassionate call; making me willing, by a powerful and victorious grace, drawing me with cords of love, and so effectually persuading me to consent to -thy covenant, and comply with thy message, on the gracious terms of the gospel. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, through his abundant mercy, hath begotten me again to a lively hope;" having humbled my proud heart, and conquered the perverseness of my stubborn will, and brought my soul to an entire subjection to himself; who took pity on me, when he saw me in my blood, spread his skirt over me, cast a mantle upon my nakedness, washed me from my sins, and put his own comeliness upon me by sanctification; who opened my eyes when I was leaping blindfold into the pit of destruction; who healed my soul, when I was sick unto death; who rescued and recovered me from the slavery of the devil, when I was led captive by him at his will. Shall not a ransomed, redeemed, slave be thankful to his deliverer? Shall not a miserable undone sinner, who is received to mercy, be thankful for a pardon? Awake, O my soul! and utter a song of praise to him, "who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life (thy soul) from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

Hath he made thee partaker of his own renewed image and likeness? given thee his Son, his grace, his Spirit; and taken such a wretched creature into so near a relation to himself; and promised to be thy God and guide, thy portion and thine inheritance, thy friend and thy physician, thy sun and thy shield, and thine exceeding great reward? And shall not my soul

speak aloud his praise? Hath he been "merciful to my unrighteousness, and blotted out my sins?" Hath he "gathered me with his arm, and carried me in his bosom?" Hath he been my Saviour and Redeemer, adopted me into his family, and promised to make me blessed in his glory, with the holy angels? The curse being removed, and the handwriting against me cancelled, the price paid, the breach made up, the mouth of justice stopped, and the condemning sentence of the law exchanged for a gracious pardon, through the sacrifice of my blessed Lord Jesus? And shall I not praise his incomprehensible love and grace?

I likewise thank thee, most holy Father, for saving me from guilt and ruin, when assaulted by powerful and dangerous temptations; that, by preventing mercy, or restraining grace, thou hast kept me from many scandalous and presumptuous crimes. I thank thee for making the sins of others a warning and a caution to me, an argument to humility, and a motive to watchfulness; for preserving my judgment from many errors and delusions, by which others are seduced; for enabling me to improve any opportunities of doing good, and making me in any thing useful to others: yea, I thank thee for all thy mercies to other Christians, for all the gifts, and graces, and usefulness of any of thy servants, wherein, as a member of the same body, I desire to rejoice; for any support and comfort to me, or any of them, under honourable sufferings for thy name's sake.

I desire unfeignedly to bless thee for any succour, relief, and victory, with respect to the snares and buffetings of Satan, and the vilest of his temptations.

When he hath tempted me to apostacy and infidelity, in speculation or practice; to question the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and the life to come; to doubt of the foundations of the Christian faith, or to despair of the mercy of God, and give up the reins to sensual lust; or to draw me from God, by the love of the world and the praise of men, by evil company, intemperance, secret wickedness, &c.

I bless thee, with my whole soul, for calling me back from any of my wanderings, and by infinite goodness recovering me after great falls, enabling me to return when I had gone astray, and seek thy forfeited favour, that thou mayest heal my backslidings; giving me, in order to it, a deep sense of my own sin, and of thy sovereign grace; leading me to a Saviour whose blood cleanseth from all sin, when my guilty defiled soul so much needeth its pardoning and cleansing virtue; awakening me to make holy vows, and calling upon me, by thy word, and Spirit, and providence, to perform them.

I bless thee, who hast guided my feet into the way of peace, when, by the terrors of an accusing conscience, and the sense of unpardoned sin, and the apprehensions of thy deserved wrath, I was ready to despair; that, though thou didst most justly hide thy face at any time, it was but for a little while, but didst seasonably, and in mercy, return to wipe off my tears, restore the joy of thy salvation, and chase away the clouds and darkness on my spirit by the reviving presence of thy own. Thou, who art the author, wilt be the finisher of my faith; and therefore, though thou hast visited mine iniquities with a fatherly rod, yet "thy loving kindness thou hast not

taken from me, nor suffered thy faithfulness to fail, nor thy covenant of peace to be removed;" but hast refreshed me with hidden manna, after great perplexities, saying unto my soul, "I am God, even thy God." Thou hast made me to hear thy voice, which was sweet; and to taste thy love, which is better than wine: enabling me to say, with thine apostle Thomas, "My Lord, and my God;" and to have any communion with thee since, in public or private duties.

For all these innumerable mercies, I desire to praise thee; which yet are but in order to greater, everlasting kindness in heaven. These are but the taste and earnest of what thou wilt bestow hereafter. Oh how great is his goodness that he hath laid up for those that fear him! And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is even in thee. I thank thee, who hast put it into my heart, to render thee solemn praise, and once more to renew my covenant with thee.

"I will magnify the Lord, and my spirit shall rejoice in God, my Saviour. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. While I live I will praise thee, and sing praises unto my God while I have a being. O come, and behold the works of the Lord, what he hath done for my soul! The Lord liveth: blessed be my rock, and let the God of my salvation be exalted. Let my heart be glad, and my glory rejoice, for the Lord is not ashamed to be called my God. Thanks be to God, who hath caused me to triumph in Christ Jesus. Sing unto the Lord, O ye his saints, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. I

cried unto thee, and thou hast healed and saved me; I will give thanks to thee for ever. I will show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night. For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endures throughout all generations. O enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. Bless the Lord, all ye his works, in all places of his dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul."

Let me add, for a conclusion, that the particular deliverances, supports, and consolations, which at any time God hath given in cases of great exigence, or in answer to importunate prayer, ought never to be forgotten. Many experienced Christians have been wont to write down such remarkable appearances of God for them, with the particular circumstances that did recommend or enhance the mercy, (whether spiritual or temporal,) as an encouragement to trust in God in future difficulties; and have afterwards found the comfort and advantage of being able to have recourse to such papers. This practice I recommend as what has been useful and consolatory to divers Christians for many years afterwards; and to some others of their more intimate friends, to whom they might, without vanity, be imparted. What experiences might be recorded of signal returns to prayer, and seasonable manifestations of the truth, and goodness, and wisdom of God, if all the instances thereof were duly recollected and preserved! And how sweet and pleasant would the work of prayer and praise then be! With what rejoicing and delight should we set about it, and live in it, if the constraining goodness and love of God, and a thankful sense of his unspeakable mercies, did bring us to him, and indite and animate every word! What support, and comfort, and probable hopes, at least, of the special love of God, might we derive from the various passages of his compassion and kindness! And hereby we may be able more heartily to give him thanks for pardon, sanctification, and adoption, which we commonly mention with too much doubt and fear.

It may likewise be advisable to examine and record the workings of your own spirit, under such dispensations; what thoughts you then had of God; what acts of faith, love, and thankfulness, you did then manifest; what evidences of God's favour, and what discovery of your own sincerity, you have had at such times; when, and how, and by what means, you were cured of your uncomfortable unbelief, and raised from your despondency; what promises you had recourse to for relief; what considerations were most hélpful to you; what frame of spirit you kept up in prayer before and after; what resolutions and engagements you made to God, to love, and trust, and praise, and serve him, and give up all to his disposal for the future; and what consequent obligation may be inferred from thence, to acquiesce in the will of God, and resign ourselves entirely to him, saying, "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he will be our guide unto death."

SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE LATE REPENTANCE AND FUNERAL OF A YOUNG MAN.

ANNO MDCLXXXI.

Ecclesiastes XI. 9.

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

Notwithstanding our manifold advantages for serious religion in our younger years, and the contrary inconveniences of deferring it to old age, or an indefinite hereafter; notwithstanding our frequent warnings by the death of others, to provide for our own, and the unspeakable hazard of a sick-bed repentance; yet how apt are the most, in their youth and strength, to forget their Creator, and themselves too! How prone to indulge carnal mirth and sensual delights, as supposing, by a fatal prejudice and mistake, that obedience to God would introduce melancholy, destroy the cheerfulness of conversation, and spoil the sweetness of human life; and thereupon refuse to bestow a serious thought about religion and

another world, till God, by sickness or a hasty death, summon them to appear before his bar. Upon which account, it cannot be thought unseasonable, upon all occasions, to remind young persons of their sin and duty, their snares and dangers, their latter end and final judgment.

What at this time directed my thoughts to such a subject, is not unknown to divers persons; namely, the death-bed repentance of a young man lately deceased, who, for some time past, attended this lecture; I hope, at length, with some seriousness and profit, though at first he came only with a design to carp and scoff, as, with great remorse, he told me in his last sickness.

And therefore, if there be any now come hither upon the same errand, and with the same thoughts, I pray God to command their attention, (for otherwise it would be in vain for me to beg it,) and accompany his own word with a powerful efficacy to convince their judgments, and persuade their wills, and awaken their souls; that they may go away with other apprehensions and resolutions than they came, as this deceased penitent once did; whose repentance and funeral may lead us to consider this affectionate apostrophe of the wise man in the text: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that, for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

For the coherence of these words with the preceding verses, we need only observe, that Solomon, in the former chapters, having given many excellent

rules for the quieting of our minds, and the comfort of our lives, under all that vanity which he pronounced upon this world, he comes, in this chapter, to exhort us to prepare for another. For, when all is done that can possibly be effected, in order to a contented and a happy life, yet he tells us, that our life itself is vain and transient, our death inevitable, and that the days of darkness will be many, verse S. And then confutes that unreasonable inference, which the young epicure is too prone to make from such premises; deriding his foolish pretence and play by an irony, and yet endeavouring to awaken his conscience, by declaring the certainty of an after-reckoning, and by a solemn citation of him before God's tribunal. For to this purpose, we may suppose the young sensualist to retort the argument: 'Are all things vain? Is life uncertain, and are death and darkness near? Let me then enjoy the light as long as I can; let me indulge my appetite, and please my senses, and gratify my lusts, and make the best improvement of this vain, this short, uncertain life. Have I but a little time in which to enjoy this world? Let me not make it shorter by a stoical reservedness; let me not lose this day, lest I never have another, but eat and drink, for to-morrow I may die.'

To which supposed objection, the wise man answers, in the words I have read: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth:" that is, 'Let it do thee good, and bring thee joy; be as merry as thou canst, and take all the satisfaction thy lust can procure; if it be thought best, and most advisable to do so.'—" Walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight

of thine eyes:" that is, ' Having resolved upon a short life and a merry one, baulk nothing which thy lust doth dictate; deny thyself nothing thy foolish heart can wish, or thy sensual appetite may crave. But know, for certain, a day of reckoning is at hand, when God will call thee to an account for thy sensual lust and youthful follies. However now thou mayest stifle the convictions of thy conscience, by repeated debauches and lewd company; however now thou mayest make a shift to drown the sentiments of a reasonable soul by the noise of riot, or bring the pleasures of the flesh to banish the presaging fears of thy immortal spirit; however now thou mayest flatter or delude thyself by the principles of a Sadducee, or please thy senses by the practice of an Epicure;' "yet, for these things, God will bring thee into judgment:" that is, 'Whether thou wilt or not, a scrutiny shall be made into thy past actions, and an account must be given of thine ill-spent life; and for all the vanities of thy youth, and the sensual pleasures that now entice thee, God, a terrible and a righteous God, will bring thee to his judgment-seat.'

And it follows, ver. 20. "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, (by avoiding sin, which is the cause of sorrow,) and put away evil from thy flesh;

for childhood and youth are vanity."

From the words may be collected these three general heads of discourse, as comprehensive of the sum of the text:—

I. In that Solomon makes use of an irony, and so, in mockery and derision, bids the young man rejoice. We may take notice, that sinful mirth, and sensual pleasure, are no real and substantial joys, fit

for a wise man to choose. It hath but the appearance and the name of joy; for what is truly so is no where to be had, without the fear of God, and the faithful keeping of his commandments.

II. In that he directs his discourse to the young man in particular; we have a plain intimation, that young persons, of all others, are most apt to lay aside the fear of God, and forget their Creator, through the temptations of sensual pleasures and youthful lusts.

III. Because he tells the young man, that even he must come to judgment, as an argument most proper to damp his carnal mirth and jollity, and put a check to his pursuit of youthful lusts; we may hence observe in what respects the consideration of a future judgment hath any force of argument, to persuade young persons to stop in their course of sin, and to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

As to the first, I shall divide it into two branches, and so consider, 1. That the carnal mirth of sinners hath but the appearance and name of joy, being expressed by an irony; while, on the contrary, they meet with trouble, and sorrow, and dissatisfaction, in pursuit of their lusts.

- 2. That the life of a serious Christian in the fear of God, and the keeping his commandments, is the only cheerful and merry life.
- 1. That sinful mirth and sensual pleasure have but the appearance and name of joy.—Doubtless, the thought of joy carrieth argument with it to allure, as that of sorrow to dissuade: on which account we are commonly averse from serious practical religion in our younger years, as supposing it would interfere

with all the pleasures of human life, and doom us to a perpetual mourning melancholy state; whereas the irony in the text may let us know, that while we walk in the way of our own hearts, and in the sight of our eyes, we deceive ourselves with the shadow of joy, and the name of mirth.

It is true, he bids the young man here rejoice, and let his heart cheer him; but it may be understood as if spoken in perfect scorn and derision, as knowing well that all his mirth and cheerfulness must be false and spurious, vain and causeless, less in quantity and worse in quality, than the rejoicing of an upright Christian: for, as to sensual mirth, so grateful and charming to the generality of youth, either it depends upon their company, which sometimes begets quarrels, and wounds without cause, or proves not suitable to their humour; or else ariseth from a particular temper of body, heightened by meats and drinks, and more than ordinary diet, (and so hath more of the beast than of the man,) and, by consequence, must needs be of a short continuance; or else is the sole effect of youth, and so will undoubtedly decay as they advance in age. However, it is in itself contemptible and base, as feigned and not sincere, as appearing and not real, as vain and without a foundation, as irrational and without a cause; and not contemptible only in itself, but likewise in relation to the subject, the inferior part of man; and much more in reference to the object of their carnal mirth, when it is not only sensual, but forbidden too; and as truly so in regard of the duration also, since it is easily disturbed and quickly gone.

How can it be imagined that a course of sin can

give a man any solid mirth, when the men themselves are at such a vast expense of care, and pains, and trouble, of unavoidable fear, and shame, and anxious thoughts, either to contrive, or to accomplish, or to conceal, their wicked purposes and practices? So that I need not ask that question, concerning the joys of the epicure, which Job doth of the hope of the hypocrite, "What is it when God shall take away his soul?" But, in the mean time, what is it now? What mirth and joy have they for the present, who must rack their brains, and stretch their fancies, and employ their most solicitous and concerned thoughts, how to make provision for their lusts; and then must baffle their reason, and debauch their consciences, actually to enjoy them? For oftentimes a troublesome conscience lays so many rubs in their way, which they know not how to remove; starts so many objections, which they cannot answer; makes so many doubts and scruples, which they know not how to resolve and overcome; that, if they will venture upon the sin, it must be even in despite of themselves.

Sometimes the very contrivance of their sins gives them sufficient uneasiness and trouble to spoil their mirth; such previous thoughtfulness being necessary to frame the model, to fix the time, to design the manner, and to order the circumstances, of some impieties; and sometimes the wickedness itself is its own punishment.

Look upon the young sinner, swelling in pride, or burning in lust, or drowning in sensuality; consider him racked with impatient desires, and burdened with unavoidable fears, lest his attempt be unsuccess-

ful, or lest he be disappointed in the secrecy of the enjoyment, and his shame and folly be published to the world; and yet this is the merry life of the sensual epicure.

Besides, when, by a custom and continuance of sin, the devil is in full possession, and lust upon the throne, what tyranny doth it exercise! and what blind obedience must the sinner yield! How often are you forced to declare, that you approve of that which your mind condemns! How often do you subscribe to that as true, which you know to be false! And so run headlong against the light of nature, and the checks of conscience, and surrender soul, and body, and all, to the will of Satan, and the command of an imperious domineering lust.

Now, what mirth or joy can consist with such a servitude; yea, while you weary yourselves to commit iniquity? What frequent vexations do you meet with from the disappointment of your hope; finding sorrow where you looked for joy, and offensive stench instead of a perfume, and a noisome weed in the room of a flower! Still something more, and farther, is thought necessary to your contentment, and satisfaction, and joy, than what you possess already; either the presence of somewhat which you cannot obtain, or the absence of somewhat which you cannot get rid of, or the continuance of somewhat which is not in your power to keep, or such a change and variety as you cannot accomplish: and must this be concluded the only merry and joyful life.

Moreover, let a man but ask you on the morrow, what is become of the pleasure of last night's debauch? When there remains nothing but a sting

in the conscience, where then, I pray, are your mirth and joy? For when once the heat of your wine and lust is over, and you dare take the liberty of sober thoughts, a guilty conscience will then tell you your own, and you shall hardly be able to stop its mouth. And though, in part, you may have washed away the sense of former drunkenness by more wine, or think to drown the voice of your bosom enemy, (the accuser within,) by running into jovial company, and an excess of riot; yet some smart affliction, or some sharp reproof, or some serious sermon, may set your sins in order again, and make your wounds to bleed afresh; and then conscience (notwithstanding your endeavours to stop its mouth, and smother its accusations) will not fail to lash the drunkard, and stone the adulterer, and make the lips of a harlot bite like a cockatrice. You shall hear its voice, and understand its errand, and feel a mortal qualm upon your spirits, from such convictions as you cannot easily stifle.

But if this be not the case of all, because some are given up to a reprobate sense; yet how often on a sick-bed doth the agitation of their own disturbed thoughts set all in a flame within, when the remembrance of their drunken excesses gives them vinegar and gall to drink, and makes them once more sick, from that terrible thought, that, for aught they know, the next draught may be of the cup of God's eternal wrath in the lake of hell; when the remembrance of their lustful heats gives them the sad prospect and præludium of unquenchable fire, into which they are sinking; when the echo of their oaths and blasphemies (which struck through the name of God) shall pierce their souls with an intolerable remorse;

when a sad reflection on their past profaneness, in scoffing at what is serious and holy, in ridiculing religion, and making a mock of sin, shall put them into a fit of trembling, from the unavoidable fears of a judgment to come. Now, if this be the ordinary state of their case, as most certain it is, well might the wise man expose their mirth to scorn, and by an irony give them leave to rejoice.

2. That the joy of a righteous, holy, person, in the fear of God, and the keeping his commandments, is the only true and proper joy; and the life of an upright Christian the only cheerful and merry life.

Whereas some have inferred that, because there is a woe pronounced in Scripture to those that laugh, and a blessedness to those that mourn and weep, that it is therefore necessary, if we will be serious Christians, that we must be sad and unsociable, melancholy and dejected, and lead a life of continual complaints and sorrows. They might as well conclude a necessity of turning monks or beggars, because the Scripture saith, that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." For, as to that part of a Christian's life which consists in the contemplation of spiritual things, the infinite excellency of the objects must render it pleasant; and as to that which consists in practice, it must needs be more so, from the encouraging testimony of a good conscience and the joy of the Holy Ghost; unspeakably more delightful and satisfactory than the most ravishing pleasures the epicure can boast of: the best of his being short and transient, and mixed with some uneasiness and trouble: but the

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delights of a holy soul are pure and substantial, durable and lasting, rising higher and increasing more by the very enjoyment, not easily interrupted by a change of outward circumstances and conditions in the world, nor broken on a sudden by little accidents that befal us unawares, which is not to be denied in reference to sensual joy.

Sirs, who is it that either is, or can be, joyful; that actually is so, or hath reason to be so, if not the upright obedient Christian?

Are not the continual presence of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the constant ministry and attendance of his blessed angels, a ground of joy? He may then rejoice. Are not peace with God, and peace with conscience, and peace with the whole creation; is not redemption from the bondage of sin, from the slavery of the devil, from the sting of death, and the curse of the law, and God's eternal wrath, enough to make him cheerful? He may then rejoice.

If the favour of God, and the acceptance of their persons and services with him, be sufficient reason to dissuade from sadness, they may then "eat their bread with joy, and drink their wine with a merry heart, for God accepteth both them and their work."

If freedom of access to the throne of grace, if a promise of being granted whatsoever they ask, if the highest assurance from a God that cannot lie, that all things shall work for good, if to dwell in his house, and sit at his table, and be related to him as a Father, if to hear his word, and sing his praise, and receive the communications of his grace, the pledges of his covenant love, and the comfortable foretastes

of everlasting joy, be enough to make them cheerful, they, and they only, have a right to be so, and that in every condition. Are they reproached and slandered? They may yet be cheerful, because "God will bring forth their righteousness as the light, and clear their integrity as the noon-day." Are they afflicted by poverty, or sickness, or disappointment, in their designs and hopes? They may yet be cheerful, and thank God for all the advantage and benefit of his wise dispensations of Providence. they tempted by the devil? They may yet be cheerful, because "God will shortly tread Satan under their feet, and not permit them to be tempted above what they are able to bear." Do they suffer for righteousness' sake? They may yet be cheerful; yea, rejoice and be exceeding glad, and count it all joy, to receive such an honour. For there are promises, particularly referring to such a state, sufficient to encourage them; yea, to make them rejoice. they sometimes mourn with a godly sorrow? Yet they may still rejoice; since to consider the end and effect of that sorrow will give it a mixture of joy; and even their penitential tears do but clear their eyes to look up to heaven with delight and comfort, and enable them the better to read a pardon.

And here it were easy to show how their faith, and hope, and love; their humility, meekness, and patience; their contentedness with God's allotment, their resignation to his will, their satisfaction in his choice, their well-pleasedness with his order, their preparedness for every condition, their diligence in their callings, their moderation in the use of lawful things, and their innocency and harmlessness in their

carriage and behaviour towards others, do all contribute to a cheerful and joyful life. Therefore, well might the Psalmist tell us, "That the righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and all the upright in heart shall glory." And well might our Lord advise his disciples not to be lifted up with the gift of miracles, but "rejoice rather that their names were written in heaven." And well might the Apostle command Christians to rejoice, (not by an irony, as Solomon here speaks to the young man, but) in the most real and proper sense: "Rejoice in the Lord always; yea, and again I say, Rejoice."

Thus much for the first general.

II. Let us consider, in that Solomon directs his discourse to the young man in particular, we have thence a plain intimation, that, of all others, young persons are most apt to neglect the fear of God, and be unmindful of their Maker, through the temptation of sensual pleasures and youthful lusts.

Though God demand his right as soon as we are capable of understanding it; and to serve the Lord from our youth is but just and reasonable, considering that so great a part of our life is already cut off by our infancy and childhood; though the longer we delay, the greater difficulty shall we meet with, whenever we set about it; though our whole life at longest (as soon as we are capable, and as long as we live) should be devoted to God, and it is all little enough, if we consider its relation to our eternal state; though the sooner we begin, the more welcome we shall be, and the more acceptable our obedience: yea, though an early piety be the only hopeful method to prevent the hazard of a sudden

death, and the uncomfortable reflections of old age, and the intolerable pangs of a death-bed remorse; yet such is the power of original sin in young persons; such, and so many, are the snares of youth, and those so agreeable to their vicious inclinations; such the force of prejudice; such the artifices of the devil; and so prevalent the persuasions of evil company; we are usually so proud, ignorant, and inexperienced; so rash, hasty, and unadvised; and so easily infected with Sadducism and the principles of infidelity; so loath to assent to any such premises, whose conclusion will infer the necessity of changing our present course; that such, of all others, do most need a serious admonition to remember their latter end, and final judgment, lest, through the temptations of sensual mirth and pleasure, they put the evil day far from them.

For, alas! how seldom do we consider, in youth, what we are, and why we were made, or what is our business in the world, and what will be the end of our present course! Whereas, one thought of God and our last judgment should be enough to drown all other thoughts, as the noise of a cannon doth that of a whisper.

Sense is so prevalent, and reason so weak; we are so much inclined to the one, and so unwilling to be led by the other; that toys and trifles, sports and recreations, and the vanities of fools and children, possess our hearts, and employ our time, neither looking behind us to what we have either done or been, nor before us, whither we are going, and what, in all likelihood, will be the period of our present mirth, and the sad catastrophe of our youthful lusts.

Young persons will hardly be convinced, but that now is their season to be brisk and jovial, having time (as they count) to command, and the world before them; they will not be persuaded, but that it is time enough to think of death, when they are arrested by sickness or withered by old age. them be concerned about another world, who are leaving this. Their blood now is warm, and their spirits are nimble, their senses are quick, and their passions strong; they "will walk in the way of their own hearts, and in the sight of their eyes, and ordinarily split upon that rock of evil company, where so many thousand vessels at their first launching out have been dashed in pieces: besides, their age is most inviting to the devil, to bend his chiefest forces against them, rather than against children or aged persons; the former not being capable of making a choice, and the latter being fixed and resolved in their way; his principal endeavours, therefore, are levelled against youth, to draw off their hearts from God and holy things, and to divert their thoughts from the consideration of death and judgment, which would otherwise restrain and check them in pursuit of their lusts; and this brings me to the third general, to consider,

III. That, for all these things, God will bring us to judgment; and therein what arguments the thoughts of a future judgment may rationally suggest, to damp the carnal mirth of young persons, and persuade them to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth."

There are many might be drawn from this passage; as, that there is a judgment to come, that

young persons shall be brought to judgment, that God will bring them to judgment, the God who made them, whom they forgot and neglected, who neither wants power nor will to make good his word, that, "for all these things," for all the ways of youthful lust and folly, "thou shalt be brought to judgment." Primarily for our affections and thoughts, for "the ways of our hearts," and for the works of our hands, and the words of our mouth, as proceeding from them. And, that this is so unquestionably certain, that all might know it, and of so much consequence, that, even in youth, it should be known and considered.

To enforce this argument, I might here remind you of the mischief you will do to others by an ill example, and of the aggravation of your sin, by employing the best of your time in the service of the devil, which must needs make judgment more terrible, in that your final doom, and the consequences of it, will be the more severe.

I might tell you, that the sooner you repent the more hopeful is your case, in reference to a pardon: I might largely describe the happy influence of an early piety, with respect to the future part of your lives, to direct your choice and govern your actions, and prevent a great deal of sin and shame, sorrow and repentance: I might mention the comfortable reflections in old age upon a well-spent life; your capacity of greater service to God now, and the assurance of a weightier crown of glory hereafter; with all the other considerable benefits, that have respect either to a safe and happy life, a comfortable old age and a peaceful death, or a joyful resurrection

and a blessed eternity; all which will come under the argument in the text; and what I shall say of it may be comprised under the following particulars:

- 1. Let young persons consider, that, notwithstanding their present mirth and jollity, yet the judgment of God is infallibly certain. It is an unquestionable, undoubted truth, that "for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."
- 2. Consider that this judgment is near at hand, and will shortly take place.
- 3. Consider your summons may be sudden, before you are aware.
- 4. Consider that in youth and health is the fittest time to prepare for this judgment of God.
- 5. That if, through the temptation of carnal mirth and youthful lust, you neglect your preparation, it is more than probable, that your passage, by death, to this judgment of God will be very uncomfortable and full of horror.
- 6. That this judgment itself, and its immediate consequences, will be intolerably dreadful to unprepared sinners, whether young or old.
- 1. Consider that, notwithstanding your present mirth and jollity, yet this final judgment is infallibly certain. "Knowing the terror of the Lord," said the Apostle, and know, that, for these things, God will bring to judgment. What is here affirmed concerning persons is asserted likewise concerning things in the next chapter, "That God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil:" methinks I need not tell you, that the doctrine of this judgment is

declared in Scripture with the greatest plainness, confirmed by the strongest evidence, and pressed upon the conscience with the most enforcing arguments; or that most of the objections on the behalf of the Sadducee, and the sensual epicure, are so very weak and trifling, that, if their lusts were not stronger than their arguments, they themselves would be ashamed to offer them.

For whosoever disbelieves a future judgment, must either conclude that the Almighty God cannot, or that the righteous God will not, call us to an account for what we have received and done, though his absolute omnipotence doth assure us that he can, and his invariable truth (having declared his purpose) that undoubtedly he will.

And can we think that all the assurance of this judgment of God, which the Scripture gives us, that all those plain assertions concerning the Judge himself, and the persons to be judged, and the consequence of the judgment, and the certainty of it; that they are only terms of art to affright the world, and not real certain truths, which will take effect according to their natural meaning? Can we suppose that the whole account is perfect fiction and mere romance? Contrived on purpose to keep the world in due decorum, and so to prevent some bad effects, only in reference to the present state of things, which would probably follow, if this belief did not obtain; whereas, is it not necessary that there should be a judgment-day for the conviction and condemnation of great sinners, that scorn the legislative authority of God, and trample on his government, and are above the check and control of human laws?

Is it not necessary to manifest the righteousness of God, as ruler of the world, in rendering to every man according to his works, and to uphold the honour of his wise government, whereof judgment is as necessary and essential a part as legislation? (the latter without the former being little else than show and mockery.) Is it not necessary, for the vindication of religion from that contempt and scorn that is poured upon it? Is it not necessary, to unriddle the mysteries of divine providence, and disclose the secret wickedness of hypocrites, and put a difference between those that serve him and those that refuse to do so? Necessary, moreover, to rectify the mistakes and false opinions that are abroad in the world concerning God, and Christ, and holiness, and sin, and to put an end to controversies, and determine the differences concerning what is truth and what is error? These, and such like things, considered, besides the authority of divine writ, do morally assure us that there will be an after-reckoning and a final judgment. And shall not one serious thought of the certainty thereof give a check to your carnal mirth, and cast a damp upon your sensual joy, and abate your heat and vigour in a course of sin? For, did we but believe that, " for all these things, God will bring us to judgment," could we so readily entertain the temptations of the devil, and fall such an easy prey to his devices? How could so many unhappy youths invade their own damnation, and snatch it, as it were, out of the hands of justice, thrust away their present and future happiness, and fly into the devil's arms, in the pursuit of their youthful lusts, though they have been told so plainly,

How could these things be, if they did but believe the certainty of this final judgment? And how dreadful will be their case, who are not awakened till they find it to be so! Who will not acknowledge this judgment of God till they know the dreadfulness and terror of it, by being brought to their trial? Who will not believe that God will ever call them to an account, till a final impenitence, joined with their infidelity, bring them under his condemning sentence?

2. Consider that this judgment is near at hand, and will shortly take place. As death will consign us over to God's tribunal, so childhood and youth, manhood and old age, are but several stages that hasten us to death. "Yet a little while," and we must "go the way of all living;" how concerned and thoughtful soever now we are about this world, we must shortly bid adieu, and take our leave: even the man of business must find a time to die, and give an account of his stewardship, though he allow himself little or none to prepare for death and judgment. Our youth and strength are quickly gone; we soon decline and languish into dust; as soon as we begin to live, we are hastening to the end of our life. As a candle, as soon as it begins to burn, or an hour-glass, as soon as it is turned, doth hasten to its end: (our life withering like a flower, and passing like a watch in the night.) We must die shortly, and much sooner than they who lived in the first ages of the world. As death is the certain consequence of old age, so those evil days (as the wise man calls them) do still draw near, and will quickly overtake us, whether we eat, or drink, or sleep; whether we be sad or merry; whether we talk or are silent; whether we work or are idle; whether we are studious or careless; whether we prepare for death and judgment, or whether we despise and avoid such thoughts; and yet how do the most spend their youthful days in vanity and sin, with a careless neglect of God and their salvation, " in gluttony and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, not putting on the Lord Jesus, nor walking in his Spirit, but making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" as if this day of the Lord were a great way off, at a mighty distance; whereas our Judge is at the door, and the end of all things doth approach, and it cannot be long ere all the world must receive their doom!

A believing thought of this would certainly imbitter the pleasures of sin, would quench our foud desires, and check our foolish hopes, and spoil the relish of our carnal joy; would blast the beauty and darken the lustre of worldly greatness; would sadden the delights, and weaken the temptations, of fleshly pleasures; for what satisfaction can that man take in jovial company, in the pastimes of children, and the laughter of fools, who is verily persuaded, that, ere long, he must appear to judgment? How can he be enamoured of this earth, and, after serious deliberation, be fond of outward grandeur, who believes and knows that shortly the earth itself shall be burnt up, the trumpet of the archangel sound, and our glorious Judge summon all mankind before his bar, by that thundering voice, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!". And can we grant this day of the Lord to be not only certain, but near at hand, and not think it time to prepare for our solemn appearance? Shall we contradict our principles, and live in a repugnancy to our avowed creed, under the plain censure of notorious hypocrisy or folly? The first, from our profession, if we do not believe it; the second, from the unsuitableness of our practice, in case we do.

3. Consider, that your summons to this judgment of God may be sudden and unexpected, and overtake you unawares: when God will require your souls to appear before his tribunal, how soon or suddenly he will do it, you cannot say. The time and place of our death, in kindness and wisdom, are concealed from us, that we may every where stand upon our guard, and every moment expect our call to judgment; because we know not whether God by sickness will advertise us of our approaching end; or his stroke be sudden by an unexpected casualty: and therefore Moses, speaking to the Jews as to one man, saith-of God, "He is thy life, and the length of thy days;" that is, the shortening or prolonging of thy days is in the hand of God. Hence some are taken the first hour, and some at the third, and some at the sixth, and some at the ninth, and others let alone till the eleventh, but this is a great uncertainty; for we may be surprised. Innumerable accidents attend us every where, that may blot our names out of the book of life, and suddenly confine us to the chambers of death. It may be, this day we are jovial and in health, among our friends and worldly affairs, and to-morrow arrested with a summons to judgment. In the morning, in a chase of earthly honour, riches, or delight, and in the evening, laid out for our funeral, by various accidents, not now foreseen by us or by any of our friends.

We may be cut off, while we presume on hereafter, while we resolve to repent, in the midst of our holy purposes, before they are performed, for, though we read in Scripture of the "sinner of a hundred years old, that he shall be accursed," yet have we no example of one in a thousand that live to that age. This young person, whose funeral occasioned my discourse, not many days since, was as strong and healthful, and as likely to live as any of us; and it is a very great question, whether you and I may have so much time and space, to repent upon a sickbed, as he had, who enjoyed his senses and the use of his reason to the very last. This day, therefore, cannot be too soon to prepare, because to-morrow may be too late: every unprepared sinner being exposed to as many hazards of everlasting destruction, as there may be accidents to surprise him with a sudden death.

4. Consider, that in youth and health is the fittest time to prepare for this final judgment.

As to the former, if we but reflect on the manifold infirmities of old age, that weakness of body, and that decay of parts, which usually accompany that state; the hardness of their hearts by a custom and continuance of sin; the loss of memory and quick apprehension; the want of those vigorous affections and flexible inclinations, which they had in youth (which makes it more difficult to convince and persuade them:) such considerations as these, should be enough to discourage us from adventuring to delay.

Besides this, how can such persons expect to find acceptance with God in the dregs of their time, after the mispending of a whole life to his dishonour? For, though I would not discourage their utmost endeavours, and through the mercy of God in Christ there is hope enough to prevent a total despair; yet, what can we suppose should be the substance of such a man's prayer, but to this effect?

"Lord, I have wasted my days in sin, and sacrificed the flower of my age to sport and folly, to the provocation of thy justice, and the hazard of my salvation; the best of all my time, I must confess, hath been devoted to the will of Satan, and devoured by my lusts; but I here present thee with the lees and refuse of my strength and age, the little fragments and poor remainder which they have left: I beseech thee, for the sake of Christ, to receive me now at last, though I did obstinately deny obedience to thy earlier, calls, and wilfully refused to return sooner; though now my strength, as well as my body, is bowed down to the grave, and I am hardly capable of doing thee any service, yet deny me not, O Lord, to live with thee in the other world, though I have lived so long without thee in this." What prevalency, do we imagine, is there like to be in so weak an address? Without a sovereign, extraordinary grace, to relieve the exigence of such sad and discouraging circumstances, how little hope is there, when you cannot consider upon any subject for a quarter of an hour without manifold interruptions?

And then as to health; that for certain is the most proper time to prepare for judgment: let us but suppose the young sinner seized by a fit of sick-

the brain and cause a delirium, yet is that a time to repent, and make your peace with God, and provide for your appearance before his judgment-seat? for usually the understanding is then clouded, the fancy then disturbed, the passions disordered, and the thoughts distracted.

Consider seriously what is wont to be the hurry of a violent distemper; suppose restlessness, through heat, or pain, or want of sleep; or suppose the physician should mistake thy case, or the devil use his subtlety and malice to deceive or terrify thy guilty soul; and then tell me whether a sick-bed be a fit season to prepare for judgment? May not thy thoughts have work enough to struggle with thy pains, or to settle thine estate, or regard thy mourning friends about thee? When thy pulse is low, and thy breath short, and thy spirits almost gone, thy sins many, and thy fears great, and thou hast hardly sufficient strength to get rid of a clot of spittle; is that a time to enter the lists with principalities and powers, and all the rulers of outer darkness? Besides, it is the case of many, that the nearer they approach to death, the less apt they are to believe it; and so perish in their security, being totally unconcerned about a future judgment.

But, supposing the free use of reason, and an awakened apprehension likewise of what refers to their immortal souls, and their eternal abode, I then add,

5. That if, through the enticements of youthful lusts, you now neglect to prepare, it is very probable (and you may justly fear it) that your passage, by

death, to this judgment of God will be very uncomfortable and full of horror. Whether repentance on the brink of the grave, after a wicked life, may be saving or not is not the question. Through an extraordinary act of grace, (whereof the penitent thief was an instance,) it cannot be denied possible; but when it is sincere and saving, who can tell any otherwise, than, as in charity, we must hope the best? For, as to the persons themselves, on a sick and deathbed, how can they, in an ordinary way, be assured of their sincerity? It is therefore probable, that their last sickness will be very uncomfortable, though their repentance should prove sincere, and their souls be saved in the day of Christ: for, suppose, when their sins stare them in the face, and they did never till now bethink themselves of the necessity of a pardon, that Satan should now tell them that their repentance comes too late to meet with that mercy they so long abused: suppose he tell them, that it is all owing to their fears of death, and the apprehended dreadful consequences of dying: if he should tell them, that the pleasures of sin are lost, and so the bait to entice them gone; that every thing about ' them looks sad and mournful, and such a change of their condition, from health to sickness and the gates of death, must needs alter their resolutions and thoughts. If he should tell them that the nearness of eternity cannot but make a person, who hath space to consider, more apprehensive of another world, and concerned about it, than at other times; and that, if sickness and death were at a greater distance, they would still be the same as ever they were; which is too sadly probable, from the many examples of those

who have returned to their former sins, as soon as they returned to their health, and left all their repentance, their holy thoughts, and good resolutions, in that sick-bed, where at first they took them up. If the devil suggest such a temptation as this to the sick penitent, who hath hitherto walked in the way of his own heart, and in the sight of his eyes; what can he reply, or plead, on his own behalf, to make proof of the sincerity of his repentance to himself, or to those about him? However, it may become us to consider seriously, that God doth oftentimes in righteous judgment open the eyes of great sinners on a death-bed, and fill their souls with an amazing horror, from the fears and foresight of his approaching vengeance. When they cannot but apprehend that their sinning season is now expired, their mirth and jollity over, their final judgment at hand, and their bodies and souls within a few hours to part, and so be divided between the grave and hell: you will then admit other thoughts, of God and his terrible judgment, than at present in your careless health; bitterly reflecting on your past follies in the days of your youth, and freely condemning your former choice. The serious review of your sensual joys (which are fled as a shadow, and vanished like a cloud of smoke) shall give you an inexpressible remorse and shame, having bartered away your souls for such a thing of nought, and ventured your eternal salvation, and for ever lost it, for a trifling lust.

"Was my God, my soul, and my salvation, of no greater value (will you then be forced to say); of no greater value, than so easily to be parted with for the short satisfaction of a brutish forbidden pleasure?

Must I leave this world I loved so dearly, and bid adieu for ever to all its enjoyments? Are all my good days past? Is all my mirth and joy concluded, and nothing but eternal sorrows to be expected? Must all my mirth and laughter be exchanged for tears and howling? My ease and pleasure for insupportable, remediless torments? Must my guilty soul be thus torn from my body, and from all things in which it took delight, to be dragged and hurried to a dismal place, where it will hate to live, and yet cannot die? Must I sport, and sing, and revel it, no more? Must I brave it out in pride no longer, and relish the delights of sense no more, no more, for ever? And, which is worse, infinitely worse, must I make my appearance before my offended Judge, whose threatenings I derided, whose wrath I provoked, whose commands I contradicted, whose servants I reproached, &c.? Must I now appear before the dreadful tribunal of this just, this holy, this inexorable Judge? Is there no hope of escaping in the crowd, and so avoiding a trial? Or is there no possibility of an excuse, when arraigned before his bar? Or is there no method to be found to evade the execution of his terrible judgment? Must I hear, and hear to my confusion, that epitome of hell comprised in a sentence; "Depart, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" Oh! what shall I be able to say for myself, when my own conscience brings the charge, and reads the indictment, and I cannot disown or deny one article of what I am accused?"

All the mercies you have received from God; all the instructive afflictions you have at any time met with; all the awakening sermons you have heard; all the motions of God's Spirit, and the rebukes of your own, which you have resisted; all the calls of his word, the warnings of his providence; and the threatenings of his wrath, which you have slighted; your knowledge of your danger, your time and space to repent, your former confessions of sin, your convictions of guilt, your purposes to reform, the reproofs you have had from others, and the promises you have made yourselves, may all be mustered up to your awakened thoughts, to seize your soul with horror and confusion, when you are called, by death, to pass to this judgment of God.

And now, Christians, it is probable you may suppose and hope this will never be your case; yet the present instance of this unhappy youth may convince you that it is possible, and more than possible. For though I never saw him, (to my knowledge,) save on his death-bed, yet having expressed his own desires, that others might take warning by his example, I need not scruple to acquaint you, (with what I learned from himself, and is well known to his surviving companions,) that, during his health, he did put the evil day far from him; and yet was very apprehensive of a future judgment, and concerned at his own unpreparedness, in his last sickness; most heartily confessing, with many tears, that he had indulged in youthful lusts, delighted in wicked company, lived in the profanation of the Sabbath, and made a mock of every thing almost that was serious, and this, notwithstanding the counsels of his friends, and some checks of his own conscience. He sadly bemoaned his forlorn state, as having little or no hope to find mercy at the hand of God, penitently

confessing his own wilfulness and folly that procured it to himself; and thereupon cried out, in the bitterness of his soul, to this effect: "Oh! had I believed and known what now I do, I would have been more concerned to secure my everlasting interest; I would have taken more care to avoid temptation; I would have employed my time to better purposes, and attended the ministry of the word in another manner, &c. but I fear it is now too late:" and then, with the greatest importunity, did beg of God to pardon and forgive him for the sake of Christ; then tossing from place to place, wringing his hands, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, with the affecting vehemence of a despairing soul, did beseech the assistance of those about him, to seek to God on his behalf. "Oh! pray for me, pray for me, for Christ's sake pray for me, that, if yet mercy may be had, the Lord would take pity on a miserable sinner. O my sins are a burden too heavy for me to bear! I have sinned, though God stood by and saw me; I have sinned, though my conscience did rebuke me for it; again, I have sinned, though I resolved to sin no more. I know not what to do, or which way to turn, &c." for with such words as these did he bewail himself, and signify the horrors of an accusing conscience. Nevertheless, for the support of his relations, and the encouragement of all returning sinners, I am willing to add, that, a little before his change, (which was sudden and unexpected, when his friends began to entertain some hopes of his recovery,) his spirit was more composed and calm, his distracting terrors much abated, and the overwhelming fears of death and judgment very much subdued and overcome.

In his confessions of sin, he owned and aggravated his crimes with the greatest freedom, with a deep remorse of spirit, and a hearty serious sense and feeling of what he spoke; he did not go about to palliate or excuse his former wickedness, to lessen or diminish it, by shifting the blame on the subtlety of the devil, the bias and inclination of a bodily temper, the corruption of human nature, or the persuasions of evil company, &c. although this last he did very much lament, as the greatest snare to his soul, and a principal occasion of his youthful sins and apprehended ruin.

Among other sins, which an accusing conscience told him of, one that did more particularly affect his heart and burden his soul, was the sin of lying. I mention this with an unfeigned desire, that all young persons (apprentices especially) would remember this example, and resolve against it.

There is one thing more, which I named first, and would here take notice of; I mean, his scoffing humour; and this he acknowledged, with a great deal of remorse and shame, that, when first he was a hearer in this place, he came with a design to jest upon the sermon, and deride the young preacher; but, not meeting with any thing on which to break a jest, or occasion mirth and laughter, nothing but what was serious, and suited to the solemn work and service of a Sabbath, he resolved to come again, and accordingly, for some time, did so, (I cannot say how long,) with other thoughts of my brethren and me, and of the serious plainness of this our way of worship, than his former ignorance and prejudices would suffer him to admit; and, thanks be to God, he is not the only instance of this kind!

Therefore I cannot but subjoin, that, as religion is not the less excellent, because some fools despise it; nor sin the less destructive, because there are some atheistical scoffers who make a mock of sin; neither is plain and serious preaching (with the purity and simplicity of gospel worship) any whit the more contemptible, because some, that sit in the chair of scorners, deride and run it down; since this kind of scoffers are usually such as cast off all thoughts of God and an after-reckoning, and are no way influenced by the consideration of a future life; to whom heaven and hell are words of sport; and the sacred Scripture matter of derision.

For none, methinks, who are serious in the practice of religion, and make a conscience of their words and actions, should dare to make a mock of the worship of God, or those that join therein, whether ministers or people, only upon the account of some little difference from that method and way of worship which they like best, when the substance and design of both are apparently the same, and believed to be so. Did men but understand what they profess by owning Christianity; did they but believe what they understand, and practise what they pretend to believe, a mere reverence and just regard to holy things, would most certainly give a check to this scoffing humour, in reference to those who cannot, in all respects, conform to their measures.

6. Lastly, Consider the dreadfulness and the terror of this final judgment, in itself, and its certain and immediate consequences to every unprepared sinner, whether young or old.

When the blessed Jesus shall be revealed from

heaven, with his mighty angels, to take the throne by his Father's order, and judge the world in righteousness; when He that stooped from heaven to earth, to be a sacrifice for sin; who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, in the days of his flesh; suffered the cruelty of men, and the wrath of his Father, and the cursed death of the cross, upon our account; when he shall come again as the Judge of quick and dead; we shall then have other thoughts of him, and of ourselves, than we now entertain.

Sirs, he now offers you a pardon, as the purchase of his death, on easy, honourable, and advantageous terms; but it will be then too late, and in vain, to beg it. He now warns you of your danger, and tells you that the end of youthful lusts is death, and judgment, and eternal wrath. And then you shall know that he spake in earnest, and his words were true. Now, as a merciful Redeemer, he entreats you to be reconciled; he shall then be clothed with vengeance, and appear, to your confusion, as a terrible Judge.

At first, he came in the form of a servant, to make our peace with God, and was thereupon despised and rejected by men. But he shall shortly come again, to render vengeance to those that would not know him as a prince and a prophet, would not receive his message, and yield obedience to his holy gospel. Now he offers life, eternal life, and begs your acceptance of it; but he will then punish your ungrateful refusal of his offered mercy. Now he entreats you to be happy, and have compassion on yourselves; but then he will be as deaf to your en-

treaties, as you have been to his; and that, though you should urge him with the greatest importunity possible; though you beseech him by the mercifulness of his nature, by the freeness of his invitation, by the compassion of his death, by the merit of his sufferings, by the kindness of his sacrifice, by the grace of the gospel, &c. Now you will not believe his promises; but then you shall experience the execution of his threatenings. Now you will not hearken to his advice and warning, but you shall shortly feel the sad effects of your contempt and obstinacy. Now you will not be constrained by his dying love; but, ere long, you shall know the power of his wrath, whether you will or not; for, though at present he offers you life, yet upon your refusal, he will shortly pronounce the sentence of eternal death. As yet he invites you to him, but then he will bid you depart: " Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

From that God, after whose image you were created, in whose favour stands your life; from that Saviour, who redeemed you by his precious blood; and from that Holy Spirit, who would have sanctified

you by his grace.

"Depart from me," and from all hopes of salvation by me: from me, and all the blessed company of saints and angels, that shall live with me for ever.

" Depart from me," abandoned to an everlasting curse (of which both souls and bodies shall be the wretched unhappy subjects,) into exquisite torments set forth by fire; and such as were originally designed for the apostate spirits, of whom the Scripture doth

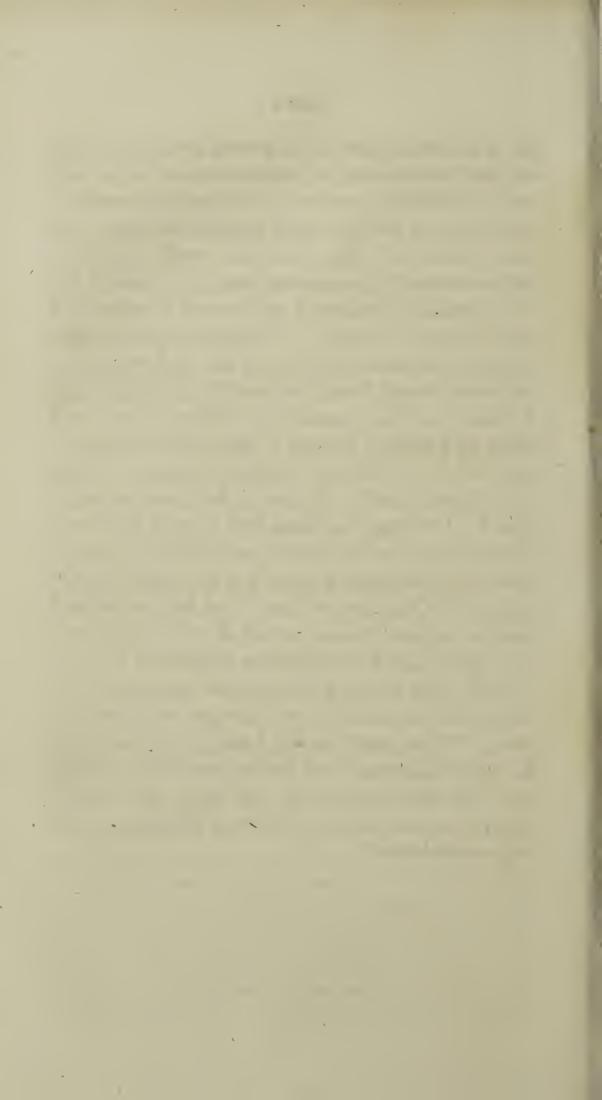
suppose one to be the principal ringleader of all the rest, and who are therefore termed "his angels."

They who tempted you to sin, shall deride your folly, and triumph in your ruin, and be your constant perpetual tormentors, since the fire is unquenchable, and never goeth out. "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, as the righteous into life eternal."

Nevertheless, how dreadful soever this sentence must needs be, it is not more intolerable in itself than unavoidable to the sinner; for where will you hide from his all-seeing eye, or how will you resist the force of his almighty arm? As it will be in vain to think of supporting his wrath, so every whit as vain to imagine a possibility of escaping it. Will the tears of a despairing sinner extinguish the fire of God's wrath, and quench the flames of hell? Will his wishing he had been wiser in the least avail, when the charge is proved, and the sentence passed? Whither would you flee from the justice of the Judge? Whither but to the mercy of a Saviour? But this Saviour is now the Judge, and become your enemy; a sight of whom shall awaken the most slumbering conscience, and make the neverdying worm gnaw your very heart; when you shall be minded of the calls and invitations you refused, and the warnings you slighted; the convictions you stifled, and the vows you broke; and you be forced to reflect on the vanities of your youth, and sadly look back on the time past of your ignorance and folly. When, for a light temptation, you ran the hazard of this heavy punishment; when, for a temporal pleasure, you ventured an endless terment;

for a mixed delight, an unmixed pain; for a momentary satisfaction, an eternal wrath; for a short sin, an everlasting sorrow. Oh! eternity! eternity! Is it true, or rather, can it possibly be false, that, after millions of ages under the wrath of God, it will not then be past the beginning of sorrows, but an everlasting vengeance will be yet to come, and will ever be to come? O cursed be my wicked companions that enticed me to sin, and so to ruin; or rather, cursed be my own stupidity and folly, that I would not be persuaded to believe, what now I know and feel! O that I were on earth again, and had the benefit of one month's space, in order to a second trial! O that I had never seen the light! Or that the earth had opened and swallowed me up in my cradle! or rather, O that in time I had received instruction, and hearkened to reproof! Oh! that in time I had believed what I was told so plainly, and warned of so faithfully, concerning God, and his righteous judgment!

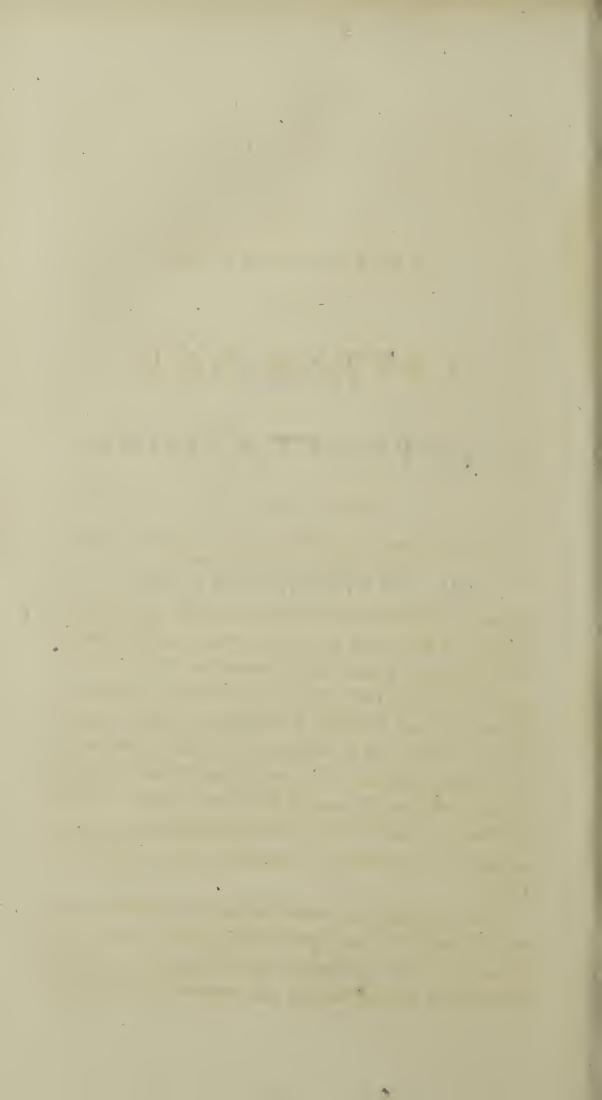
Now, that this may never be the case of any one of us, let me conclude with the advice of the prophet, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while you look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."



DIVINE CONTEMPLATIONS.

BY

SIR MATTHEW HALE, KNT.



ON THE

CONSIDERATION

OF OUR

LATTER END.

DEUT. XXXII. 29.

"O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!"

It may probably be thought, that the principal intention of this wish of Moses was, that the people of Israel had a due consideration of their final rejection; the ten tribes for their idolatry, and the two tribes for their crucifying of the Messiah; and not only of that state of rejection, but of the causes of it: namely, idolatry, and rejection of the Messiah; which consideration would have made them wise and prudent to avoid those great apostacies which should occasion so terrible a desertion and rejection by God.

But certainly the words contain an evident truth, with relation to every particular person, and to that latter end that is common to all mankind; namely, their latter end by death, and separation of the soul

and body; the due consideration whereof is a great part of wisdom, and a great means to attain and improve it; and very many of the sins and follies of mankind, as they do in a great measure proceed from the want of an attentive and serious consideration of it; so would they be, in a great measure, cured by it.

It is the most certain, known, experienced truth in the world, that all men must die; that the time of that death is uncertain; that yet most-certainly it will come, and that within the compass of no long time: though the time of our life might be protracted to its longest period, yet it is ten thousand to one that it exceeds fourscore years; where one man attains to that age, ten thousand die before it: and this lecture is read to us by the many casualties and diseases that put a period to the lives of many, in our own experience and observation; by the many warnings and monitions of mortality that every man finds in himself, either by the occurrences of diseases and weaknesses, or especially by the declinations that are apparent in us, if we attain to any considerable age: and the weekly bills of mortality, and the monuments and graves in every church and church-yard, do not only evince the truth of it, whereof no man of understanding doubts, but do incessantly inculcate the remembrance of it.

And yet it is strange to see, that this great truth, whereof, in theory, no man doubts, is little considered, or thought upon, by the most of mankind: but notwithstanding all these monitions and remembrances of mortality, the living lay it not to heart, and look upon it as a business that little concerns

them; as if they were not concerned in this common condition of mankind, and as if the condition of mortality only concerned those that actually die, or are under the immediate harbingers of it, some desperate or acute diseases; but concerned not those that are at present in health, or not under the stroke of a mortal sickness. The reasons of this inconsiderateness seem principally these:—

- 1. That men are not willing to entertain this unwelcome thought of their own latter end; the thought whereof is so unwelcome and troublesome a guest, that it seems to blast and wither all those present enjoyments of sense that this life affords; whereby it comes to pass, that as death itself is unwelcome when it draws near, so the thoughts and pre-apprehensions of it become as unwelcome as the thing itself.
- 2. A vain foolish conceit that the consideration of our latter end is a kind of presage and invitation of it; and upon this account I have known many superstitiously and foolishly forbear the making of their wills, because it seemed to them ominous, and a presage of death; whereas this consideration, though it fits and prepares a man for death, doth no way hasten or presage it.
- 3. A great difficulty that ordinarily attends our human condition, to think otherwise concerning our condition than what at present we feel and find. We are now in health, and we can hardly bring ourselves to think that a time must and will come, wherein we shall be sick; we are now in life, and therefore we can hardly cast our thoughts into such a mould, as to think we shall die; and hence it is

true, as the common proverb is, "That there is no man so old, but he thinks he shall live a year longer."

It is true, this is the way of mankind to put from us the evil day, and the thoughts of it; but this our way is our folly, and one of the greatest occasions of those other follies that commonly attend our lives; and therefore, the greatest means to cure this folly, and to make us wise, is wisely to consider our latter end. This wisdom appears in those excellent effects it produceth, which are generally those two:

- I. It teacheth us to live well.
- II. It teacheth us to die easily.
- I. For the former of these, the consideration of our latter end, doth in no sort make our lives the shorter, but it is a great means to make our lives the better.
- 1. It is a great monition and warning of us to avoid sin, and a great means to prevent it. When I shall consider that certainly I must die, and I know not how soon, why should I commit those things, that if they hasten not my latter end, yet they will make it more uneasy and troublesome by the reflection upon what I have done amiss? I may die to-morrow, why should I then commit that evil that will then be gall and bitterness to me? Would I do it if I were to die to-morrow? why should I then do it to-day? Perchance it may be the last act of my life, and however let me not conclude so ill; for, for ought I know, it may be my concluding scene in this last act of my life.
- 2. It is a great motive and means to put us upon the best and most profitable improvement of our time. There be certain civil and natural actions of

our lives, that God Almighty hath indulged and allowed to us, and indeed commanded us, with moderation, to use; as the competent supplies of our own natures with moderation and sobriety; the provisions for our families, relations, and dependences, without covetousness or anxiety; the diligent and faithful walking in our callings, and discharge thereof. But there are also other businesses of great importance, which are yet attainable without injuring ourselves in those common concerns of our lives; namely, our knowledge of God and of his will, of the doctrine of our redemption by Christ, our repentance of sins past, making and keeping our peace with God, acquainting ourselves with him, living to his glory, walking as in his presence, praying to him, learning to depend upon him, rejoicing in him, walking thankfully with him: these, and such as these, are the great business and end of our lives, for which we enjoy them in this world; and these fit, and prepare us for that which is to come. And the consideration that our lives are short and uncertain, and that death will sooner or later come, puts us upon this resolution and practice, to do this our great work while it is called to-day; that we loiter not away our day, and neglect our task and work while we have time and opportunity, lest the night overtake us, when we cannot work; to gain oil in our lamps before the door be shut. And if men would wisely consider their latter end, they might do this great business, this one thing necessary, with ease and quietness; yea, and without any neglect of what is necessary to be done in order to the common necessities of our lives and callings.

It is not these that disable us and rob us of our time; but the thieves that rob us of our time, and our one thing necessary, are negligence, excess of pleasures, immoderate and excessive cares, and solicitousness for wealth, honour, and grandeur; excessive eating, drinking, curiosity, and idleness: these are the great consumptives that do not only exhaust that time that would be with infinite advantage spent in our attainment, and perfecting, and finishing, the great work and business of our lives; and then, when sickness and death comes, and God Almighty calls upon us to give up the account of our stewardship, we are all in confusion, our business is not half done, it may be not begun; and yet our lamp is out, our day is spent, night hath overtaken us; and what we do, is with much trouble, perplexity, and vexation; and possibly our soul takes its flight before we can-finish it. And all this would have been prevented and remedied by a due consideration of our latter end; and that would have put us upon making use of the present time, and present opportunity, to do our great work, "while it is called to-day," because the "night cometh, when no man can work."

3. Most certainly the wise consideration of our latter end, and the employment of ourselves on that account, upon that one thing necessary, renders life the most contented and comfortable life in the world: for as a man, that is beforehand in the world, hath a much more quiet life in order to externals, than he that is behind-hand; so such a man that takes his opportunity to gain a stock of grace and favour with God, that hath made his peace with his Maker through Christ Jesus, hath done a great

part of the chief business of his life, and is ready, upon all occasions, for all conditions, whereunto the divine providence shall assign him, whether of life, or death, or health, or sickness, or poverty, or riches; he is, as it were, beforehand in the business and concern of his everlasting, and of his present state also. If God lend him longer life in this world, he carries on his great business to greater degrees of perfection, with ease, and without difficulty, trouble, or perturbation. But if Almighty God cut him shorter, and call him to give an account of his stewardship, he is ready, and his accounts are fair, and his business is not now to be gone about: "Blessed is that servant whom his Master, when he comes, shall find so doing."

II. As thus this consideration makes life better, so it makes death easy.

- 1. By frequent consideration of death and dissolution a man is taught not to fear it; he is, as it were, acquainted with it beforehand, by often preparation for it. The fear of death is more terrible than death itself; and by frequent consideration thereof, a man hath learned not to fear it. Even children, by being accustomed to what was at first terrible to them, learn not to fear.
- 2. By frequent consideration of our latter end, death comes to be no surprise to us. The great terror of death is when it surpriseth a man unawares; but anticipation and preparation for it, takes away all possibility of surprise upon him that is prepared to receive it. Bilney, the martyr, was used, before his martyrdom, to put his finger in the candle, that so the flames might be no novelty unto him, nor

surprise him, by reason of unacquaintedness with them; and he that often considers his latter end, seems to experience death before it comes, whereby he is neither surprised nor affrighted with it when it comes.

3. The greatest sting and terror of death, are the unrepented sins of the past life; the reflection upon these, is that which is the strength, the elixir, the venom of death itself. He, therefore, that wisely considers his latter end, takes care to make his peace with God in his lifetime; and by true faith and repentance, to get his pardon sealed; to enter into covenant with his God, and to keep it; to husband his time in the fear of God; to observe his will, and keep his laws; to have his conscience clean and clear: and, being thus prepared, the malignity of death is cured, and the bitterness of it healed, and the fear of it removed. And when a man can entertain it with such an appeal to Almighty God, as once the good king Hezekiah made, in that sickness which was of itself mortal: "Remember now, I beseech thee, O Lord, how I have walked before thee with a perfect heart," &c. it makes as well the thought, as the approach of death, no terrible business.

But that which above all makes death easy to such a considering man, is this, that by the help of this consideration, and the due improvements of it, as is before shown, death to such a man, becomes nothing else but a gate unto a better life: not so much a dissolution of this present life, as a change of it for a far more glorious, happy, and immortal life. So that though the body dies, the man dies

not; for the soul, which is indeed the man, makes but a transition from her life in the body, to a life in heaven: no moment intervenes between the putting off the one, to the putting on the other. And this is the great privilege that the Son of God hath given us, that by his death he hath sanctified it unto us, and by his life hath conquered it, not only in himself, but for us. "Thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And our victory, that is thus given us, is this. 1. That the sting of death is taken away. And, 2. That this very death itself is rendered to us a gate and passage to life eternal; and upon this account, it can neither hurt, nor may justly affright us. It is reported of the adder, that when she is old, she glides through some strait passage, and leaves her old skin in the passage, and thereby renews her vigour and her life. It is true, this passage through death is somewhat strait, and uneasy to the body; which, like the decayed skin of the adder, is left by the way, and not without some pain and difficulty to it: but the soul passeth through without any harm, and without any expense of time, and in the next moment acquires her estate of immortality and happiness. And this is the victory over death that all those have, that by true repentance and faith are partakers of Christ, and the benefits of his death and resurrection, "who hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel."

And now, having gone through the benefits of this wise consideration of our latter end, I shall now add some cautions that are necessary to be annexed to

this consideration. We are to know, that although death be thus sudden, and rendered rather a benefit

than a terror to good men; yet,

1. Death is not to be wished or desired; though it be an object not to be feared, it is a thing not to be coveted; for certainly life is the greatest temporal blessing in this world. It was the passion, not the virtue of that excellent prophet Elijah, that he desired to die, because he thought himself only left of the true worshippers of God. We are placed in the world by Almighty God, and a talent of life is delivered to us, and we are commanded to improve it; a task is set every one of us in this life, by the great Master of the family of heaven and earth; and we are required, with patience, and obedience, and faithfulness, to perform our task, and not to be weary of our work, nor wish our day at an end before its time. When our Lord calls us, it is our duty, with courage and cheerfulness, to obey his call; but until he calls, it is our duty, with patience and contentedness, to perform our task, to be doing our work. And indeed in this life, our Lord has delivered us several tasks of great importance to do; as, namely, 1. To improve our graces and virtues, our knowledge and faith, and those works of piety and goodness that he requires. The better and closer we follow that business here, the greater will be our reward and improvement of glory hereafter. And therefore, as we must, with all readiness, give over our work when our Master calls us, so we must, with all diligence and perseverence, continue our employment till he calls us; and, with all thankfulness to God, entertain and rejoice in that portion

of life he lends us; because we have thereby an opportunity of doing our Master the more service, and of improving the degrees of our own glory and happiness. 2. And besides the former, he hath also set us another task; namely, to serve our generation; to give an example of virtue and goodness; to encourage others in the ways of virtue and goodness; to provide for our families and relations; to do all good offices of justice, righteousness, liberality, charity to others; cheerfully and industriously to follow our callings and employments; as well natural, as civil, and moral employments; which, though of a lower importance in respect of ourselves, yet are of greater use and moment in respect of others; and are, as well as the former, required of us, and part of the task that our great Lord requires of us; and for the sake of which, he also bestows many talents upon us, to be thus improved in this life, and for which we must also, at the end of our day, give our Lord an account: and therefore, for the sake of this also, we are to be thankful for our life, and not be desirous to leave our post, our station, our business, our life, till our Lord calls us to himself in the ordinary way of his providence; for he is the only Lord of our lives, and we are not the lords of our own lives.

2. A second caution is this; that as the business, and employments, and concerns of our life must not estrange us from the thoughts of death, so again we must be careful that the overmuch thought of death do not so much possess our minds, as to make us forget the concerns of life, nor neglect the business which that portion of time is allowed us for; as the

business of fitting our souls for heaven, the businesses of our callings, relations, places, stations; nay, the comfortable, thankful, sober, enjoyments of those honest, lawful comforts of our life that God lends us, so as it be done with great sobriety and moderation, as in the presence of God, and with much thankfulness to him; for this is part of that very duty we owe to God, for those very external comforts and blessings we enjoy. A wise and due consideration of our latter end, is neither to render us a sad, melancholy, disconsolate people; nor to render us unfit for the businesses and offices of our life; but to make us more watchful, vigilant, industrious, soberly cheerful and thankful to that God, that hath been pleased thus to make us serviceable to him, comfortable to ourselves, profitable to others; and after all this, to take away the bitterness and sting of death through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REDEMPTION OF TIME.

I WOULD consider these particulars: I. What that time is which we are to redeem. II. What it is to redeem that time. III. How that time is to be redeemed. IV. Why that time is thus to be redeemed.

I. The first of these, what that time is, that is to be redeemed. The philosophers trouble themselves much about what time is, and leave it very difficult; but we shall not need to trouble ourselves with that inquiry. The time that is here meant, seems to be under this double relation: first, In relation to some apt season for any thing to be done; and then it is properly called opportunity, which is nothing else but the coincidence of some circumstance accommodated to some action suitable to it: as the time for the husbandman to reap his corn, is when the corn is ripe, and the weather seasonable. It is time for the smith to forge iron when it is hot, and therefore malleable. And so in matters moral; it is a time to show mercy when an object of misery occurs, and a power to give relief. This, as I take it, is that which the Greeks call naipos, or opportunity, Secondly, In relation to that continuance of the

duration of the reasonable creature in life, in this world, or the time of our life.

II. To redeem time, therefore, is in relation to both these, namely, 1. In relation to seasons and opportunities; the redemption of time in this respect is, first, Diligently to watch and observe all fitting seasons and opportunities of doing all the good we may, whether in relation to Almighty God, his service, and glory; or in relation to others, in all acts of charity and justice; or in relation to ourselves, in improvements of knowledge, piety, and virtue. Secondly, Industriously to lay hold of all these opportunities, and not to let them slip, but to apply suitable actions to suitable opportunities, when they occur. 2. In relation to the times of our lives; and so we are said to redeem our time. First, When we constantly employ our time, and leave few vacuities and intervals in it without employing them. The opposite to this, is idleness, or doing nothing. Secondly, When we employ our time constantly in doing something that is suitable to the value and usefulness of our time. The opposites to this, are, first, The sinful employment of our time, which is indeed worse than idleness: or, secondly, The vain, and impertinent, and unprofitable employment of our time, as Domitian did in killing flies. Thirdly, When we employ our time, not only in things profitable, but in such things as are of greatest use and importance; and therefore such employments, as are of the greatest importance and concern, ought to take up the greatest and most considerable part of our time; otherwise we are imprudent and irrational in the improvement or redemption of our time. And therefore, this redeeming of our time is ordinarily called husbanding of our time, in resemblance of the husbandman's proceeding with his ground. If the husbandman doth not till and sow his ground, but is idle; or if he takes much pains in tilling of the ground, and sows nothing but cockle and darnel, or such hurtful seeds; or if he sows not that which is hurtful, but sows light or unprofitable corn; or sows that ground with a more ignoble and useless grain, which would with more reason and advantage be employed in a more noble grain, that would yield more profit; or if he sows a suitable grain, but observes not the season proper for it; that man is an ill husband of his ground: and he that with the like negligence, or imprudence, husbands his time, is an ill husband of his time, and doth not redeem it as he is here directed. But of this more in the text.

cular methods of husbanding time under both the former relations, namely, in relation to opportunity, and in relation to our time of life, shall be promiscuously set down. Now the actions of our lives may be distinguished into several kinds, and in relation to those several actions, will the employment of our times be diversified. 1. There are actions natural; such as eating, drinking, sleep, motion, rest. 2. Actions civil; as provision for families, bearing of public offices in times of peace or war; moderate recreations, employments in civil vocations, as agriculture, mechanical trades, liberal professions. 3. Actions moral; whether relating to ourselves, as sobriety, temperance, moderation, (which though they are

rather habits than actions, and the actions of them rather consist in negatives than positives, yet I style them actions) or relating to others, as acts of justice, charity, compassion, liberality. 4. Or, lastly, Actions religious, relating to Almighty God, as invocation, thanksgiving, inquiring into his works, will, obedience to his law and commands, observing solemn seasons of his worship and service, and which must go through and give a tincture to all the rest, a habit of fear of him, love to him, humility, and integrity of heart and soul before him; and, in sum, a habit of religion towards God in his Son Jesus Christ, which is the one thing necessary, and overweighs all the rest upon these accounts; 1. In respect of the excellency and sovereignty of the object, Almighty God, to whom we owe our being, and the strength and flower of our souls. 2. In respect of the nobleness of the end thereby to be attained; for whereas all the rest serve only to the meridian of this life, the latter hath a relation to an eternal life. 3. In respect of the nobleness of the habit itself which hath a universal influence on all the rest of the before-mentioned relations, and advanceth, improveth, and ennobleth them. It would be too long to prosecute the methods of redeeming the time in the particular relation to all these actions; therefore, in this pursuit of the manner of redeeming the time, I shall set down only these generals.

1. We are to neglect no opportunity that occurs to do good; but, 1. To watch all opportunities, that offer themselves thereunto. 2. To seek for them, if they offer not themselves. 3. To use them, and not to let them slip.

- 2. In the coincidence of opportunities of several kinds, and suiting to several actions, to give those the preference that correspond to the most worthy actions; and in the coincidence of opportunities for actions of equal moment, to prefer such as are most rare, and probably unlikely to occur again, before those that are under a probability of frequent occurrence.
- 3. We are to be very careful to leave no baulks or interspersions of idleness in our lives. Those men that have most employment, and of the most constant nature, cannot but have certain intervals between the varieties of business, which may be fitted with employments suitable to their length or qualities; and it becomes a good husband of his time, to have some designations and destinations of businesses that may be suitable to the nature, quality, seasons, of those vacant intervals. An industrious husbandman, tradesman, scholar, will never want business fitted for occasional vacancies and leisure hours. Gellius, in his Noctes Atticæ, has left us an experiment of it: and a Christian, even as such, hath ready employment for occasional interstices, reading, praying; the crumbs and fragments of time would be furnished with their suitable employments; it is precious, and therefore let none of it be lost.
- 4. Much time might be saved and redeemed in retrenching the unnecessary expenses thereof in our ordinary sleep, attiring and dressing ourselves, and the length of our meals, as breakfasts, dinners, suppers; which, especially in this latter age, and among people of the better sort, are protracted to an im-

moderate and excessive length: there is little less than ten or twelve hours every day spent in these occasions of life, which might be fairly reduced to much less.

- 5. Take heed of entertaining vain thoughts, which are a very great consumption of time, and are very incident to melancholy and fanciful persons, whom I have known to sit the greater part of several days in projecting what they would do if they had such estates, honours, or places, and such kind of unprofitable and vain meditations; which humour is much improved in them that lie long in bed in the morning.
- 6. Beware of too much recreation. Some bodily exercise is necessary, for sedentary men especially; but let it not be too frequent, nor too long. Gaming, taverns, and plays, as they are pernicious, and corrupt youth; so, if they had no other fault, yet they are justly to be declined in respect of their excessive expense of time, and habituating men to idleness and vain thoughts, and disturbing passions and symptoms when they are past, as well as while they are used. Let no recreations of any long continuance be used in the morning, for they hazard the loss or discomposure of the whole day after.
- 7. Visits made or received, are for the most part an intolerable consumption of time, unless prudently ordered: and they are for the most part spent in vain and impertinent discourses. 1. Let them not be used in the morning. 2. Let the visits made to, or by persons of impertinence, be short, and at such times as may be best spared from what is more useful or necessary, namely, at meals, or presently

after. 3. But if the persons to be visited, are men of wisdom, learning, or eminence of parts, the visits may be longer; but yet so as the time may be profitably spent in useful discourses, which carries in it as well profit and advantage as civility and respect.

8. Be obstinately constant to your devotions at certain set times, and be sure to spend the Lord's day entirely in those religious duties proper for it; and let nothing but an inevitable necessity divert you from it. For, 1. It is the best and most profitable spent time; it is in order to the great end of your being in the world. 2. It is in order to your everlasting happiness; in comparison of which, all other business of this life is idle and vain; it is that which will give you the greatest comfort in your life, in your sickness, in your death; and he is a fool that provides not for that which will most certainly come. 3. It is the most reasonable tribute imaginable to that God, that lends you your time, and you are bound to pay it under all the obligations of duty and gratitude: and, 4. It is that which will sanctify and prosper all the rest of your time, and your secular employments. I am not apt to be superstitious, but this I have certainly and infallibly found true, that by my deportment in my duty towards God, in the times devoted to his service, especially on the Lord's day, I could make a certain conjecture of my success in my secular concerns the rest of the week after. If I were loose and negligent in the former, the latter never succeeded well; if strict, and conscientious, and watchful in the former, I was successful and prosperous in the latter.

9. Be industrious and faithful in your calling.

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The merciful God hath not only indulged us with a far greater portion of time for our ordinary occasions, than he hath reserved to himself, but also enjoins and requires our industry and diligence in it. And remember that you observe that industry and diligence, not only as civil means to acquire a competency for yourself and your family, but also as an act of obedience to his command and ordinance: by means whereof, you make it not only an act of civil conversation, but of obedience to Almighty God, and so it becomes in a manner spiritualized into an act of religion.

10. Whatever you do, be very careful to retain in your heart a habit of religion, that may be always about you, and keep your heart and your life always as in his presence, and tending towards him. be continually with you, and put itself into acts, even although you are not in a solemn posture of religious worship, and will lend you multitudes of religious applications to Almighty God, upon all occasions and interventions, which will not at all hinder you in any measure in your secular occasions, but better and further you; it will make you faithful in your calling, even upon the account of anactual reflection of your mind upon the presence and command of the God you fear and love; it will make you actually thankful for successes and supplies; temperate and sober in all your natural actions; just and faithful in all your dealings; patient and contented in all your disappointments and crosses; and actually to consider and intend his honour in all you do; and will give a tincture of religion and devotion upon all your secular employments, and turn those

very actions, which are materially civil or natural, into the very true and formal nature of religion, and make your whole life to be an unintermitted life of religion and duty to God. For this habit of piety in your soul, will not only not lie sleeping and inactive, but almost in every hour of the day will put forth actual exertings of itself in applications of short occasional prayers, thanksgiving, dependence; resort unto that God that is always near you, and lodgeth in a manner in your heart by his fear, and love, and habitual religion towards him. And by this means you do effectually, and in the best and readiest manner imaginable, doubly redeem your time. 1. In the lawful exercise of those natural and civil concerns which are not only permitted, but, in a great measure, enjoined by Almighty God. 2. At the same time exercising acts of religious duties, observance, and veneration unto Almighty God, by perpetuated, or at least frequently reiterated, though short, acts of devotion to him. And this is the great art of Christian chemistry, to convert those acts that are materially natural or civil, into acts truly and formally religious; whereby the whole course of this life is both truly and interpretatively a service to Almighty God, and an uninterrupted state of religion, which is the best and noblest, and most universal redemption of the time.

11. Be very careful to prefer those actions of your life that most concern you; be sure to do them chiefly, to do them most. Let those things, that are of less moment, give place-to those things that are of the greatest moment. Every man of the most ordinary prudence, having many things to do, will

he sure to be doing that first and chiefly which most concerns him, and which being omitted and possibly wholly neglected, might occasion his most irreparable loss. We have, it is true, many things to be done in this life; Ars longa, vita brevis; and we have seasons and opportunities for them: but of these many things, some are barely conveniences for this life: some, though they seem more necessary, yet still they rise no higher, nor look any further, nor serve any longer, but only for the meridian of this life, and are of no possible use in the next moment after death. The pleasures, the profits, the honours, the most florid accommodations of great human learning, stately houses and palaces, goodly possessions, greatest honours, highest reputation, deepest policy, they are fitted only to this life; when death comes, they are insignificant, pitiful things, and serve for nothing at all the very next moment after death; nay, the diseases, and pains, and languishings, that are the preludes of death, render them perfectly vain, if not vexatious and torturing. But there are certain businesses, that are not only excellently useful in this life, but such as abide by us in sickness, in death; nay, go along with us with singular comfort into the next life, and never leave us, in an eternal state of rest and happiness, such as may be, with much ease, acquired in the time of health and life, but very difficult to be attained in the time of sickness, and the hour of death, but never to be forgotten after death; such as are of that necessity, that, in comparison of them, all other things are impertinent and vain, if not desperately noxious and hurtful. There is no necessity for me to be

rich, and to be great in the world; to have such a title of honour, such a place of dignity or profit; to leave such an inheritance or titular dignity to my son; or to have so many thousand pounds in my inventory, when I die. But there are certain matters of absolute necessity to me, such as, if I am without, I am undone and lost, and yet such as, if not attained here in this life, can never be attained: and therefore, as it concerns me in the highest degree to attain them, so it concerns me in the highest degree to attain them in this life, and to take all opportunities imaginable in order thereunto, and to redeem every minute of time for that purpose, lest I should be for ever disappointed, and not be like the foolish virgins, to be getting oil when the door is ready to be shut; and, with the truant scholar, to trifle away my time allotted me for my lesson, and then begin to learn it when my master calls me to repeat And those businesses are such as these: the knowledge of Christ Jesus, and him crucified; the attainment of faith in God through him; the acquaintance of myself with the will of God, the comporting of myself with that will; the exercise of true and serious repentance for sins past; the steady resolution of obedience to his will for the time to come; the attaining of the pardon of my sins, and peace with God through Christ our Lord; the subduing of my lusts and corruptions; the conformation of my will and life to the holy will of God, and the perfect pattern of holiness, Christ Jesus; the working out of my salvation with fear and trembling; the giving all diligence to make my calling and election sure; the fitting and purging of myself to be

a vessel of glory and immortality, and fitted for the use of my great Lord and Master; the casting myself into such a frame and posture of mind and life, that I may be fitted and ready to die, and give up my account to my Lord with peace and cheerfulness, and comfort; so that if I should, either by the hand of some disease or casualty, or other providence, receive this solemn message, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die," I might receive it with as much readiness, willingness, and cheerfulness, as a faithful and diligent servant would receive this command from his master, 'You must take such a journey for me to-morrow.' These, and such like businesses as these, besides the constant tenor of a just, virtuous, and pious life, are the most important businesses of a Christian. First, such as are of absolute necessity to him, he may not, he cannot be without them. Secondly, such as cannot be done elsewhere than in this life: the world is the great laboratory for perfecting of souls for the next; if they are not done here, they cease to be done for ever: death shuts the door, and everlastingly seals us up in that state it finds us. Thirdly, and every season of this life is not at least so suitable for it: sickness and pain, and wearisome and froward old age, have business enough of themselves to entertain us; and any man that hath had experience of either, will find he hath enough to do to bear them, or to struggle with And, fourthly, we know not whether the grace and opportunities that God hath lent us, and we have neglected in our lives, shall ever be afforded again to us in the times of our sicknesses, or upon our deathbeds; but little portions of time in our

lives and healths are furnished with thousands of invitations and golden opportunities for these great works. Let us therefore redeem those portions of time, that our life and health lend us, for this great and one thing necessary.

And now, if a man will take a survey of the common course, even of the Christian world, we shall find the generality of mankind the veriest children, fools, and madmen, that ever nature yielded. The very folly of children, in spending their time in rattles and hobby-horses, is more excusable than theirs, whose reason and experience should better instruct them. There is not any man so senseless, but he knows he must die, and he knows not how soon he shall hear of that sad summons; and if he were so brutish as not to think of it, or believe it, yet the weekly bills of mortality give him daily instances of it: and yet, if we do but observe the world of men, they do, for the most part, wholly trifle away their time in doing that which is evil; or in doing nothing to any purpose, or becoming a reasonable nature. One man trifles away his time in feasting and jollity; another in gaming, or vain and unnecessary recreations, in hunting, hawking, fowling, and other wasting expenses of time: another in fine clothes, powderings, and painting, and dressing; another in hunting after honours and preferments, or heaping up of wealth and riches, and lading himself with thick clay; another in trivial speculations, possibly touching some criticism or grammatical nicety: and all these men wonderfully pride themselves as the only wise men, look big and goodly, and when they come to die, all these prove either vexations and tortures of mispent time; or, at least, by the very appearance of sickness and death, are rendered poor, empty, insipid, and insignificant things; and then the minister is sent for, the sacrament desired, and nothing but penitence, and complaints of the vanity of the world; unhappy expenses of time; and all the wealth and honour would be presently sacrificed for the redemption of those mispent hours, and days, and years, that cannot be recalled, nor redeemed by the price of a world. But the great misery of mankind is this, they cannot, or will not, in the time of health, anticipate the consideration of death and judgment to come; nor put on any apprehensions or thoughts, that the time will come when things will be otherwise with them than it now is, or that they will be driven into another kind of estimate of things. than they now have, and this their way is their folly. Man being in honour, in health, in life, understandeth not, but becomes like the beasts that perish, Psal. xlix. 12.

IV. I come to the reasons why we ought thus to redeem our time, which may be these:

1. Our time is a talent put into our hands by the great Lord of the whole family of heaven and earth, and such whereof we are to give an account when our Master calls, and it will be a lamentable account, when it shall consist only of such items as these: Item, So much of it spent in plays, and taverns, and gaming. Item, So much of it spent in sleeping, eating, drinking. Item, So much spent in recreations, and pastimes. Item, So much spent in getting wealth, and honour, &c. and there remains so much which was spent in doing nothing.

- 2. Our time is a universal talent, that every man, that lives to discretion, hath. Every man hath not a talent of learning, or of wealth, or honour, or subtilty of wit to account for; but every man that lives to the age of discretion hath time to account for.
- 3. Every man hath not only a talent of time, but every man hath a talent of opportunity, to improve his talent in some measure, put into his hand. The very works and light of nature, the very principles of natural religion are lodged in the hearts of all men; which, by the help of his natural reason, he might exercise to some acts of service, duty, and religion towards God. But the Christian hath much more.
- 4. The redemption and improvement of our time is the next and immediate end why it is given, or lent us, and why we are placed in this life; and the wasting of our time is a disappointment of this very end of our being; for thereby we consequently disappoint God of his glory, and ourselves of our happiness.
- 5. Upon the management and disposal of our time depends the everlasting concernment of our souls. Ex hoc momento pendet æternitas. If it be redeemed, improved, and employed as it ought to be, we shall, in the next moment after death, enter into an immutable, eternal, and perfect state of glory; if it be either sinfully or idly spent, we fall into an everlasting, irrecoverable, and unchangeable state of misery.
- 6. The business we have to do in this life, in order to the cleansing of our souls, and fitting them for glory, is a great and important business, and the time we have to live hath two most dangerous quali-

our longest period is not above eighty years, and few there be that arrive to that age. 2. It is very casual and uncertain: there be infinite accidents, diseases, and distempers that cut us off suddenly; as acute diseases, such as scarce give us any warning; and considering how many strings, as it were, there are to hold us up, and how small and inconsiderable they are, and how easily broken, and the breach or disorder of any of the least of them may be an inlet to death, it is a kind of miracle that we live a month. Again, there be many diseases that render us in a manner dead while we live, as apoplexies, palsies, phrensies, stone, gout, which render our time either grievous, or very unuseful to us.

- 7. Time once lost, is lost for ever: it is never to be recovered; all the wealth of both the Indies will not redeem nor recal the last hour I spent; it ceaseth for ever.
- 8. As our time is short, so there be many things that corrode and waste that short time; so that there remains but little that is serviceable to our best employment. Let us take but out of our longest lives, the weakness and folly of childhood and youth; the impotency and morosity of our old age; the times for eating, drinking, sleeping, though with moderation; the times of sickness and indisposedness of health; the times of cares, journeys, and travel; the times for necessary recreations; interview of friends and relations, and a thousand such expenses of time; the residue will be a small pittance for our business of greatest moment, the business, I mean, of fitting our souls for glory; and, if that be mispent, or idly

spent, we have lost our treasure, and the very flower and jewel of our time.

- 9. Let us but remember, that when we shall come to die, and our souls sit, as it were, hovering upon our lips, ready to take their flight, at how great a rate we should then be willing to purchase some of those hours we once trifled away, but we cannot.
- 10. Remember that this is the very elixir, the very hell of hell to the damned spirits, that they had once a time, wherein they might, upon easy terms, have procured everlasting rest and glory; but they foolishly and vainly mispent that time and season, which is not now to be recovered.

REMEMBERING OUR CREATOR

IN THE

DAYS OF OUR YOUTH.

Ecclesiastes XII. 1.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Two things are principally commended to us in this text. I. A duty enjoined, to remember our Creator. II. The principal season of that duty, the days of our youth. Which season is recommended for this duty, by way of preference above the evil days; not, as if the remembering our Creator were unseasonable at any time; but, because the time of our youth is more seasonable, than that evil time, or those evil days, wherein we shall say, we have no pleasure in them.

- I. The duty enjoined, is to remember our Creator; which imports two things: 1. To know our Creator; for we cannot remember that we have not some knowledge of. 2. To remember him; often to call him to mind.
 - 1. The former part of this duty is to know our

Creator. This is that which aged David recommended to his young son Solomon, "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father." And we have two excellent books, wherein the knowledge of God is discovered to us; the book of his works, the works of his creation and providence; and the book of his word, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, wherein he is more fully, and explicitly, and plainly discovered to These books we are often to read and con-And this is the chief reason, why understanding and reason is given unto mankind, and not unto the beasts that perish: namely, that we might improve it to the attaining of the knowledge of Almighty God, in the due consideration of the works and word of God. And hereby, we learn his eternity, his infinitude, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, his justice, his mercy, his all-sufficiency, his sovereignty, his providence, his will, his purpose concerning mankind, his care of them, his beneficence towards them. And the nature of this knowledge is not barely speculative, but it is a knowledge that is operative, that perfects our nature, that conforms it to the image of that God we thus know, that sets mankind in its due state and station; keeps it in its just subordination unto the God we thus know, which is our greatest perfection. This knowledge must necessarily make us love him, because he is good, merciful, bountiful, beneficent; and, therefore, the wise man chooseth to express him by that title of Creator, from whom we receive our very being, and all the good that can accompany it. This knowledge teacheth us to be thankful to him, as our greatest benefactor; to depend upon him, because of his power and goodness; to fear him, because of his power and justice; to obey him, because of his power, justice, and sovereignty; to walk before him in sincerity, because of his power, justice, and wisdom. In sum, the several attributes of Almighty God strike upon the choicest parts, and faculties, and affections, and tendencies of our hearts and souls, and tune them into that order and harmony that is best suited to the perfecting of our nature, and the placing of them in a right and just posture, both in relation to Almighty God, ourselves, and others.

2. The second part of our duty is, to remember our Creator thus known; which is to have the sense and exercise of this knowledge always about us; to set Almighty God always before our eyes; frequently to think of him, to make our application to him. For many there are that may have a knowledge of God, but yet the exercise of that knowledge is suspended; sometimes by inadvertence and inconsiderateness, sometimes by a wilful abdication of the exercise of that knowledge. And these are such as forget God, that have not God in all their thoughts; that say to the Almighty, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

The benefits of remembering our Creator are very great: 1. It keeps the soul and life in a constant, true, and regular frame. As the want of the knowledge, so the want of the remembrance of God, is the cause of that disorder and irregularity of our minds and lives. 2. And, consequently, the best preventive of sin, and apostacy, and backsliding from God, and our duty to him. 3. It keeps the mind

and soul full of constant peace and tranquillity; because it maintains a constant, humble, and comfortable converse of the soul, with the presence and favour of God. 4. It renders all conditions of life comfortable, and full of contentment, because it keeps the soul in the presence of God, and communicates unto it continual influxes of contentment and comfort; for what can disturb him, who, by the continual remembrance of his Creator, hath a constant acquaintance with this power, goodness, and allsufficiency? 5. Though no man hath ground enough to promise to himself an immunity from temporal calamities, yet certainly there is no better expedient in the world to secure a man against them, and preserve him from them, than this: for the most of those sharp afflictions that befal man, are but to make them remember thèir Creator when they have forgotten him, that he may open their ears to discipline, and awaken them to remember their Creator. Job xxxiii. A man that keeps about him the remembrance of his Creator, prevents, in a great measure, the necessity of that severe discipline. 6. In short, this remembrance of our Creator, is an antidote against the allurements of the world, the temptation of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin. It renders the best things the world can afford inconsiderable, in comparison of him whom we remember; it renders the worst the world can do but little and contemptible; so long as we remember our Creator, it makes our lives happy, our deaths easy, and carries us to an everlasting enjoyment of that Creator whom we have here remembered.

The injunction of the duty of remembering our

Creator, is the more importantly necessary: 1. In regard of the great consequence of the benefit we receive from it, as stated before. 2. In regard of the great danger of omitting it. The truth is, the greater part of the miscarriages of our lives are occasioned by the want of the remembrance of our Creator: then it is that we fail in our duty, when we forget him. 3. In regard of the many temptations this world affords to make us forget our Creator; the pleasures, and profits, and recreations, and preferments, and noise, and business of this life, yea, many of them, which are in themselves and in their nature, lawful, are apt to engross our thoughts, our time, our cares, and to leave too little room in our memory for this great duty that most deserves it, namely, the remembrance of our Creator. Our memory is a noble cabinet, and there cannot be a more excellent jewel to lodge in it than our great and bountiful Creator; yet, for the most part, we fill this noble cabinet with pebbles and straws, if not with dung and filth; with either sinful, or, at least, with unprofitable, impertinent, trifling furniture.

II. The season for this duty, that here is principally commended, the days of our youth: and the reasons that commend that season for this duty, are

principally these:

1. Because this is the most accepted time. God Almighty was pleased under the old law to intimate this, in the reservation to himself of the first-fruits, and the first-born; and surely the first-fruits of our lives, when dedicated to his remembrance, are best accepted of him.

2. Because this season is commonly our turning

season to good or evil. If in youth we forget our Creator, it is a very great difficulty to resume our duty; commonly it requires either very extraordinary grace, or very strong affliction to reclaim a man to his duty, whose youth hath been seasoned with ill principles, and the forgetfulness of God.

- 3. Because the time of youth is most obnoxious to forget God; there is great inadvertency and inconsiderateness, unstableness, vanity, love of pleasures, easiness to be corrupted in youth; and therefore necessary in this season to lodge the remembrance of our Creator in our youth, to be an antidote against these defects, to establish and fix the entrance of our lives with this great preservative, the remembrance of our Creator.
- 4. When Almighty God lays hold of our youth, by a timely remembrance of himself, and thereby takes the first possession of our souls, commonly it keeps its ground, and seasons the whole course of our ensuing lives; it prevents and anticipates the devil and the world. It is true, it may possibly be, that natural corruption and worldly temptations may suspend the actings of this principle, but it is rarely extinguished; it is like that abiding seed remaining in him, spoken of by John, 1 John iii. 9. which will recover him again.
- 5. The last reason is, because there are evil days that will certainly come, which will render this work of remembering our Creator difficult to be first begun; and therefore it is the greatest prudence imaginable to lay in this stock before they come, for it will certainly stand us in great stead when they do come. It is the greatest imprudence in the world to defer

that husiness which is necessary to be done, to such a time wherein it is very difficult to be done; and it is the greatest prudence in the world to do that work which must be done, in such a season wherein it may be easily and safely done. He that lays in this store of remembrance of his Creator before the evil day come, will find it of the greatest use and service to him in that evil day.

Now those evil days are many, and all of them befal some; but some of them will certainly befal all mankind.

- 1. An evil day of public or private calamities. He that beforehand hath laid in this stock of remembering his Creator, will be easily able to bear any calamity when it comes; but a man that hath not done this beforehand, will find it a very unseasonable time to begin to set about it, when fear, and anguish, and perplexity, and storms, and confusion, are round about him, and take up all his thoughts.
- 2. The evil day of sickness is an unseasonable time, or, at least, a very difficult time to begin such a business. When sickness, and pain, and disorder, and uneasiness, shall render a man impatient and full of trouble, and his thoughts full of disorder, and discomposure, and waywardness, then it will be found a difficult business to begin the remembrance of our Creator. It is true, no time is utterly unacceptable to God for this work; but surely it is best to begin before this evil day come: for then it will be a comfort, and mitigate the pains and discomposures of sickness, when a man can thus reflect upon his life past, as Hezekiah did in his sickness, "Remember, O Lord, that I have not failed to remember my Creator in the days of my health."

- 3. The evil day of old and infirm age, which is a disease and burden of itself, and yet it is ever accompanied with our sicknesses, pains, and diseases, and a natural frowardness, and morosity, and discontentedness of mind, and therefore, not so seasonable to begin the undertaking of this work as in flourishing youth. And indeed, a man cannot reasonably expect, that the great God, who invites the remembering our Creator in the days of our youth, and hath been ungratefully denied, should accept the dregs of our age for a sacrifice, when we have neglected the thoughts of him in our strong and flourishing age. But, on the other side, that man that hath spent the time of his youth and strength in the remembrance of his Creator, may, with comfort and contentment, in his old and feeble age, reflect upon his past life with Hezekiah, "Remember, O Lord, I pray thee, that I have not failed to remember thee in the days of my youth and strength; and I pray thee accept of the endeavours of my old decayed age, to preserve that remembrance of thee which I so early began, and have constantly continued, and pardon the defects that the natural decays of my strength and age have occasioned in that duty."
- 4. The evil day of death: when my soul sits hovering upon my lips, and is ready to take its flight; when all the world cannot give my life any certain truce for a day or for an hour, and I am under the cold embraces of death; then to begin to remember my Creator is a difficult and unseasonable time. But when I have begun that business early, and held on the remembrance of my Creator, it will be a cordial even against death itself, and will carry

my soul into the presence of that God, which I have thus remembered, in and from the days of my youth, with triumph and rejoicing.

Briefly, therefore,

- 1. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" because thou knowest not whether thou shalt have any other season to remember him: death may overtake thee, and lay thee in the land of forgetfulness; thy spring may be thy autumn, and thy early bud may be the only fruit that mortality may afford thee.
- 2. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" because it is a time of invitation: neglect not this season, because thou knowest not whether ever thou shalt be again invited to it.
- 3. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," that thy Creator may remember thee in the days of thy sickness and old age, and in the evil day.
- 4. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," lest thy Creator neglect thee in the evil day. Neglected favours, especially from God, may justly provoke him never to lend thee more: "Because I called, and ye refused; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh."
- 5. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," because it will heal the evil of evil days: when they come, it will turn those days, that are in themselves evil, to become days of ease and comfort; it will heal the evil of the day of affliction, of sickness, of old age, and of death itself; and make it a passage into a better, a more abiding life.

CONTINUING CITY HERE.

Hebrews XIII. 14.

" For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

I HAVE, in my course of life, had as many stations and places of habitation as most men. I have been in almost continual motion. And although, of all earthly things, I have the most desired rest, retiredness, and a fixed private station; yet the various changes that I have seen and found, the public employments, that, without my seeking, and against my inclination, have been put upon me, and many other interventions, as well private as public, have made the former part of this text true to me in the letter,that I have had no continuing city, or place of habitation. When I had designed to myself a settled mansion in one place, and had fitted it to my convenience and repose, I have been presently constrained, by my necessary employments, to leave it, and repair to another. And when, again, I had thought to find repose there, and had again fitted it to my convenience, yet some other necessary occurrences have diverted me from it: and thus, by seve-

ral vicissitudes, my dwellings have been like so many inns to a traveller; though of some longer continuance, yet almost of equal instability and vicissitude. This unsettledness of station, though troublesome, yet hath given me a good and practical moral; namely, that I must not expect my rest in this lower world, but must make it as the place of my journey and pilgrimage, not of my repose and rest, but must look further for that happiness. And truly, when I consider that it hath been the wisdom of God Almighty to exercise those worthies, which he left as patterns to the rest of mankind, with this kind of discipline in this world, I have reason not to complain of it as a difficulty, or an inconvenience, but to be thankful to him for it as an instruction and document, to put me in remembrance of a better home, and to incite me to make a due provision for it, even that everlasting rest which he hath provided for them that love him; and, by pouring me thus from vessel to vessel, to keep me from fixing myself too much upon this world below. But the truth is, did we consider this world as becomes us, even as wise men, we may easily find, without the help of any such particular discipline of this nature, that this world below neither was intended, nor indeed can be a place of rest, but only a kind of laboratory to fit and prepare the souls of the children of men for a better and more abiding state; a school to exercise and train us up into habits of patience and obedience, till we are fitted to another station; a little narrow nursery, wherein we may be dressed and pruned, till transplanted into a better paradise. The continual troubles, and discomposures, and sicknesses, and weaknesses,

and calamities, that attend our lives, the shortness, and continued vexation occurring in them; and finally, the common examples of death, and mortality of all ages, sexes, conditions of mankind, are a sufficient instruction to convince reasonable men, that have the seriousness and patience to consider and observe, that we have no abiding city here. And, on the other hand, if we will give ourselves but the leisure to consider and observe the great wisdom of Almighty God, that orders every thing in the world to ends suitable and proportionable; the excellence of the soul and mind of man; the great advances and improvements his nature is capable of; the admirable means the merciful and wise God hath afforded to mankind, by his works of nature and providence, by his word and instructions, to enable him for a nobler life than this world below can yield; will easily confess, that there is another state, another city to come, which becomes every good, and wise, and considerate man to look after, and fit himself for. And yet, let a man look upon the generality of mankind with a due and severe consideration, they will appear to be like a company of mad or distempered people. The generality of the world make it their whole business to provide for a rest and happiness in this world, to make these vain acquests of wealth, and honour, and preferments, and pleasures of this world, their great, if not only, business and happiness; and, which is yet a higher degree of phrensy, to esteem this the only wisdom, and to esteem the careful provision for eternity the folly of a few weak, melancholy, fanciful men: whereas it is in truth, and in due time it will most evidently appear, that those men that are most

sedulous and solicitous, touching the attaining of their everlasting rest, are the only true wise men, and so shall be acknowledged by those that now despise them. "We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!"

When I come to my inn, I have this consideration presently occurring to me. If my lodging be good and fair, the furniture splendid, the attendance great, the provisions good and well ordered; yet I straight consider this is not the place of my rest: I must leave it to-morrow, and therefore I set not my heart upon it. And again, if my inn be but poor, my entertainment mean, my lodging decayed, I do not presently send for painters, carpenters, and masons, to repair or beautify it, but I content myself with it, and will bear with the inconveniences, because I consider it will be but for a night, and to-morrow I shall be gone, and possibly come to my home, where I shall be better convenienced. And although the truth is, that this world is little other than our inn to entertain us in our journey to another life; and our stay in it is many times very short, yea, our longest stay here, in comparison of eternity, is infinitely more short than a night's lodging at an inn, in comparison to the longest life here; yet it is a wonderful thing to observe how much we are taken up with the concerns of this our inn, what a stir we keep about it, what pains and cost we employ in it, how much of our time is laid out upon it, as if it were our only home. If our lot cast us upon a handsome lodging, as it were, and it furnished with wealth, or glory, or

honour, how we pride ourselves in it! how goodly we look upon ourselves! how happy we think ourselves! what care we have to make it more rich, glorious, and splendid! And, on the other hand, if our lot cast us upon a lower, meaner station, if we are poor, or sickly, or neglected, or under hatches, what a deal of impatience, and discontent, and unquietness appears! Nay, though our lodging and entertainment in this inn of the world be pretty well, and will serve our journey; yet if it be not so fine, and splendid, and rich, and comely as another's; if our meat be enough to suffice nature, if our clothes enough to protect us from cold, if our house good enough to keep off the storms, and defend us from injuries; yet if these be not so good as such a man's, or such a neighbour's, not so good as my ancestors or relations-Lord! what a deal of unquietness, and complaining, and envy, and impatience, and turbulency of mind there is in men! what designs, and frauds, and plots, and underminings, and undue means, men take to advance their own condition, and to depress others; and all this while never consider that which would easily cure the extravagance, as well on one hand as on the other; namely, "This is not my home, it is but my inn: if it be beautiful, splendid, convenient; if my condition in it be wealthy, honourable, prosperous, I will not set my heart upon it, nor think any better of myself for it, nor set up my rest in it: it is but my inn, I must leave it, it may be to-morrow. On the other hand, if it be but poor, weak, infirm, ignoble, low, I will content myself, it is but my inn, it may serve for my passage: I shall, it may be, leave it to-morrow; and then, if

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I have taken that due care that becomes me in my provision for my eternal state, I am certain the case will be mended with me: however my inn be poor, mean, inconvenient, troublesome, it is but for a night, my home will be better; I have learned that I have here no abiding city, but I seek one to come." The benefits of the consideration of this text are

many,

1. It will teach a man a very low esteem of this present world, and never to set the heart upon it. "Wilt thou set thy heart upon that which is not?" It is not an abiding city: either like the old feigned enchanted castles, it will vanish and come to little, while we think we have fast hold of it; or else we must leave it we know not how soon. It is full of trouble and vexation when we enjoy it, and very unstable and uncertain is our stay in it. But let it be as good as it will, or can be, yet this text tells of a city that is better worth our thoughts, an abiding city, a city that cannot be shaken, where there are no troubles, no thorns, no cares, no fears; but righteousness, and everlasting peace and rest.

2. Consequently, it will teach us to seek that which is of most value first and most, and make that our greatest endeavour which is our greatest concern; namely, to seek that city that is to come, peace with God in Christ Jesus, and the hope of eternal life. It is true, while we are in this city that continues not, this inferior world, God Almighty requires a due care for externals, and industry in our employments, and diligence in our callings: it is part of that service we owe to God, to our families, to our relations, to ourselves; and being done in contemplation

of his command, it is an act of obedience and religious duty to him: but this consideration will add this benefit even unto our ordinary employments in our calling, it will be sure to bring a blessing upon it. "Seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you." It shall be given in as an advantage and over-measure. It will add great cheerfulness to the employments of your calling, and to those worldly employments that are requisite for your support and subsistence, when you shall resign up your endeavours therein to the good pleasure of Almighty God. It will remove all vexatious solicitousness and anxiety from you, when you shall have such considerations as these: "Almighty God, it is true, hath placed men in this world, as in a passage to another, and requires of me an honest employment for my support and subsistence; or else hath lent me a reasonable, liberal portion, whereby I may comfortably subsist without much pains or labour. I will use it soberly, cheerfully, thankfully: if he bless me with increase, or greater plenty, I will increase my humility, sobriety, and thankfulness; but if it be not his pleasure to bless me with plenty and increase, his will be done; I have enough in that I have; there is another more abiding city, wherein I shall have supplies without want, or fears, or cares."

3. This consideration will give abundance of quietness, patience, tranquillity of mind, in all conditions. Am I in this world poor, or despised, or disgraced, or in sickness or pain? yet this text gives me two great supports under it. 1. It will be but short: this lower world, the region of these troubles and

storms, is no continuing, no abiding city; and, consequently, the troubles and storms of this inferior city are not abiding or long. 2. After this flitting, perishing city, that thus passeth away, this sour life, which is but the region of death, there succeeds another city that endureth for ever; a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, a state of everlasting blessedness, where are neither cares, nor tears, nor fears, nor poverty, nor sorrow, nor want, nor reproach; I will, therefore, with all patience, cheerfulness, and contentedness, bear whatsoever God pleaseth to exercise me withal in this life; for I well know that my light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall be attended with a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

These considerations will seem but dry and empty to men that do not deeply and considerately weigh matters: ordinarily young heads think them, at least, unseasonable for their youth; but they must know, that sickness and death will overtake the youngest in time, and that will undeceive people, and render the best appearances of this world, either bitter, or at least insipid, and without any pleasant relish; and then the hopes and expectations of this city to come will be of more value to us than the best conveniences and delights this lower world can afford. Let us, therefore, in our health, make it our business to secure our interest in it, and it will be our comfort and benefit both in life and death.

AFFLICTIONS.

Job v. 6, 7.

"Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

JoB's friends, though, in the particular case of Job, they were mistaken, yet they were certainly very wise, godly, and observing men; and many of their sentences were full of excellent and useful truths, and particularly this speech of Eliphaz, which importeth these two propositions:—

1. That the general state of man in this world is a state of trouble and affliction; and it is so common to him, so incident to all degrees and conditions of mankind, that it seems almost as universal, as that natural propension in the sparks to fly upward: no person of whatsoever age, sex, condition, degree, quality, profession, but hath a part in this common state of mankind: and although some seem to have a greater portion of it than others, some seem to have greater and longer vicissitudes, and intermissions, and allays thereof than others, yet

none are totally exempt from it; yea, it is rare to find any man, that hath had the ordinary extent of the age of man, but his troubles, crosses, calamities, and afflictions, have overweighed and exceeded the measures of his comforts and contentments in this life.

2. That yet those afflictions and troubles do neither grow up by a certain regular and constant course of nature, as plants and vegetables do out of the ground; neither are they merely accidental and casual, but they are sent, disposed, directed, and managed by the conduct and guidance of the most wise providence of Almighty God, and this he proveth in the sequel of the chapter. And, as in all things in nature, the most wise God doth nothing at random, or at a venture; so in this part of his providential dispensation towards mankind, he doth exercise the same, with excellent wisdom, and for excellent ends; even for the good and advantage of mankind in general, and particularly of those very persons that seem most to suffer and be afflicted by them; sometimes to correct, sometimes to prevent, sometimes to heal, sometimes to prepare, sometimes to humble, always to instruct, and teach, and better the children of men.

And, indeed, if there were no other end but these that follow, this seeming sharp providence of Almighty God would be highly justified. Namely, First, To keep men humble and disciplinable. Man is a proud, vain creature; and were that humour constantly fed with prosperity and success, it would strangely puff up this vain humour: afflictions and troubles are the excellent and necessary correctives

of it, and lance this swelling imposthume of pride and haughtiness, which would otherwise render men intolerable in themselves and to one another. condly, To bring mankind to recognize Almighty God, to seek to him, to depend upon him: this is the most natural and special effect of afflictions: "In their afflictions they will seek me early." The rough and stubborn mariners in a storm, will cry every one to his God. Thirdly, To tutor and discipline the children of men in this great lesson, that their happiness lies not in this world, but in a better; and by this means, even by the crosses, and vexations, and troubles, of this world, and by these plain and sensible documents, to carry mankind up to the end of their beings. God knows, those few and little comforts of this life, notwithstanding all the troubles and crosses with which they are interlarded, are apt to keep the hearts, even of good men, in too great love of this world. What would become of us, if our whole lives here should be altogether prosperous and contenting, without the intermixture of crosses and afflictions? But of the great things more hereafter.

Now, since the state of mankind in this world is for the most part thus cloudy and stormy, and that, ordinarily, we can expect it to be no otherwise, there are these considerations which become every wise and good mind to acquaint himself with.

- I. What preparation is fit to be made by every man before they come.
- II. How they are to be received, and entertained, and improved, when they come, and while they are incumbent.

- III. What is the best and safest temper of mind when any of them are removed.
- I. Touching the first of these; namely, preparation before they come; the best preparatives seem to be these:—
- 1. A right and sound conviction, and consideration of this most certain experimental truth; namely, That no man whatsoever, how good, just, pious, wise soever, can by any means expect to be exempt from them, but must be more or less subject to afflictions of one kind or other, at one time or another, in one measure or another; for man is certainly born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. And this certain truth will be evident, if we consider the several kinds of afflictions that are common to mankind: and herein I shall forbear the instances which concern our childhood and youth, as such, that yet notwithstanding are subject to afflictions, which, though they seem not such to men of riper years, are yet as real and pungent, and deeply and sensibly grievous to them, as those that seem of greater moment to men of riper years; but I shall apply myself to those instances which are more evident, and of which those that have the exercise of their reason may be more capable.

Afflictions seem to be of two kinds: (1.) Either such as are common calamities, befalling a nation, city, or society of men. (2.) Or more personal, as they concern man individually.

(1.) Touching the former of these, namely, common calamities, such as wars, devastations, famines, pestilences, spreading contagions, epidemical diseases, great conflagrations; experience tells us, and

daily lets us see, that they involve in their extent the generality of men, good and bad, just and unjust, pious and profane: and although the gracious God is sometimes pleased, for ends best known to himself, strangely to preserve and rescue, as it were, some out of a common calamity, yet it is that which I do not know how any man can promise himself, though otherwise ever so pious and just, because I find not that anywhere, in the evangelical dispensation, God Almighty hath promised to any person any such immunity: and common experience shows us, that good and bad are oftentimes involved in the effects and extremities of the same common calamity. And indeed it would be little less than a miracle, and somewhat above the ordinary course of the Almighty's arrangement of things, to give particular exceptions in such cases. If a man receive any such blessing from God, he is bound eminently to acknowledge it is a signal, if not miraculous, intervention of the divine mercy, but it is not that which a man can reasonably expect; because, although upon great and momentous occasions, Almighty God is pleased not only to give out miracles, but even to promise them also, as in the justifying of the truth of the gospel, in the first publication thereof, yet it is not right for any particular person to suppose, that, for the preservation of a particular interest or concern, God Almighty should be, as it were, engaged to put forth a miracle, or little less than a miracle; and the reasons of this are,

1st, Because, under the evangelical dispensation, the reward of goodness, piety, and obedience, is of another kind, and of greater moment, namely, eternal happiness, and not exemption from temporal calamities; if Almighty God grant such an exemption, it is of bounty and abundance, not of promise. is true, under the old covenant with the people of Israel, their promises were in great measure of temporal benefits, and the constitution of that church, as it was in a great measure typical, so the divine administration over them was usually miraculous, both in their blessings, preservations, and exemptions. And there was a special reason for it; for they were to be a monument to all mankind, and also to future ages, of a special and signal arrangement; and, consequently, the obedient might, upon the account of the divine promise, expect blessings and deliverances, even in public calamities that might befal the people in general: but we have no warrant to carry over those promises of temporal benefits and exemptions to the obedience under the gospel, which, as it is founded upon another covenant, so it is furnished with better promises.

2d, Because the best of men in this life have sins and failings enow, to justify the justice of Almighty God, in exposing them to temporal calamities; and yet his mercy, goodness, and bounty, are abundantly magnified in reserving a reward in heaven far beyond the merit of their best obedience and dutifulness: so that, though they are exposed to temporal calamities, Almighty God still remains, not only a true and faithful, but a liberal and bountiful Lord unto them in their everlasting rewards. What are light afflictions, and but for a moment, in comparison to an eternal weight of glory? And the latter is the reward of their obedience under the gospel, while

the former may be possibly the punishment, or at least, correction for their sins.

And therefore, although at the intercession of Abraham, the Lord was pleased to grant a relaxation of the destruction of Sodom, for the sake of ten righteous, it was an act of his bounty; and so it was when he delivered Lot and his family: yet he had not been unjust if he had swept them away in that common temporal calamity, because possibly the sins of Lot himself might have been such, as might have acquitted the justice of God in so doing; for the highest temporal calamity is not disproportionate to any one sin. And although he were pleased in mercy to spare Lot and his two daughters, yet neither was he wholly exempted from that great calamity; for his house, goods, and the rest of his family, perished in that terrible conflagration.

And upon this consideration, we have just cause to blame two sorts of persons; namely, 1. The rash censure of some inconsiderate persons, that are too ready to censure all such as fall under a common calamity, whether of fire, sword, or pestilence; as if they were therefore greater sinners than those that escape. The error is reproved by our Saviour in the instance of the Galileans, and those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. 2. The mistaken apprehension of men concerning themselves, that upon an opinion of their own righteousness or desert, think themselves exempted from the stroke of common calamities, or are ready to accuse the divine justice, if they are not delivered from them. If they truly considered the just demerit of any sin, and their own sins and failings; they would acknowledge both the justice and goodness of God, if he reserve an eternal reward of their obedience, though he expose them to the worst of temporal evils.

(2.) Concerning personal evils, they are of several kinds. 1st, Such as befal the body. 2d, Such as befal the estate. 3d, Such as befal the name. 4th, Such as befal a man's friends or relations.

1st, Touching the first of these evils, namely, those that befal the body, they are of two kinds. 1. Some that are not so epidemical or universal upon all men; such are casualties or accidental hurts, diseases springing from the particular complexion or temperament of persons, such as are hereditary diseases, incident to certain ages, infectious diseases arising from contagion, putrefaction, ill disposition of the air or waters. 2. Some diseases are incident to every man in the world. If a man lives to a great old age, his very age is a disease, and the decay of natural heat and moisture, doth in time bring the oldest man to his end; but if he live not to the attainment of old age, most certainly as he meets with death in the conclusion, so he meets with some disease or other that makes way for his dissolution. So that, upon the whole account, though this or that man may not meet with this or that particular disease, casualty, or distemper that, it may be, attacks another, yet as sure as he is mortal, so sure shall some disease, distemper, casualty, or weakness meet with him, that shall bring him to the dust of death. That person, therefore, that is subject to the universal edict and law of death, is and must be subject, sooner or later, to those diseases, sicknesses, casualties or weaknesses, that must usher in his death and

dissolution. And although one man may escape a chronical disease, another an acute disease; one man may escape a contagion, another a consumption; one man may escape this disease or casualty, another that; yet most certain it is, that every man shall meet with some disease, distemper, or casualty that shall be sufficient to dissolve his composition, and put a period to his life.

2d, Concerning afflictions that particularly affect a man in his estate. It is very true that some are more afflicted in this kind than others. The more wealth any man hath, the more obnoxious to losses; and the more any man loves wealth, the deeper the afflictions of this nature wound him: and this is generally true in all worldly matters whatsoever; the more a man's heart is set upon it, the deeper and the more bitter the cross or affliction is therein. But though afflictions of this kind, pinch some closer than others, yet there are very few that totally escape those in this kind. The poor man reckons it his affliction that he wants wealth; and the rich man is not without his affliction, either in loss of it, or the fear of such losses, which create as real a trouble as the loss itself: fire and shipwreck, envy and oppression, false accusations, robbers, a prodigal heir, or a false friend, thousands of such like avenues there are to rich men's treasure: and either they do actually attack it, and then they cause sorrow; or they do continually menace it, and so they cause fear. Nay, sometimes a rich man hath as great an affliction in his knowing not where, or how, to dispose of his wealth, as he that wants it.

'3d, Touching afflictions in the name: most cer-

tainly, of all things in the world, a good name is most easily exposed to the injury of any person; a false accusation, or false report, an action or word misinterpreted. A man hath no security of his wealth against invasions of others; but he hath much less security touching his name, because it is in keeping of others more than of the man himself: and it is visible to every man's experience, that he that bath the greatest name is most exposed to the envy, and therefore, to the detraction and calumnies of others; and he that values his name and reputation most, is easiest blasted, and deeper wounded by calumny, though really false, than he that hath little reputation, or he that esteems it lightly.

4th, Touching friends: there are two things that induce the loss of friends: 1. That which seems casual, yet very common, whereby either friends become enemies, or at least grow into neglect; which is sometimes done by misrepresentations, false reports, by prevalency of factions, by difference in matters of interest, by the declination of a man's 2. That which is certain: death takes away a man's friends and relations from him, or him from them; the more friends and relations any man hath, the more losses of them or in them he shall necessarily have upon this account; because every one of them is subject to all those casualties that any one of them is subject to, whether in estate, name, body, or death, and, consequently, the more friends and relations, the more crosses and calamities; for all the crosses and losses that befal any of my friends are communicated to me, and in a manner made mine: and the greater my number of friends and relations

are, the more losses of them and in them I am subject to; for every one of them is subject to the same calamities with myself, which become in effect mine by participation. So that the more friends and relations I have, and the dearer and nearer they are, the more crosses I have, by participating therein: and every bitter arrow that wounds any of them, glanceth upon me, and makes my wounds the more, by how much the more friends and relations I have; and makes them the deeper, by how much the nearer and dearer those friends or relations are to me. is true, that in a multitude of good and dear friends and relations, there is a communication of more comforts: but since, generally, the scene of every man's life is fuller of crosses than comforts, the troubles and afflictions of many friends or relations outbalance and overweigh those comforts.

And these crosses and afflictions in body, estate, name, and friends, though possibly they may not all come together, or in their perfection, at one time, upon any one man; yet, as no man is exempt from any of them at any time by any special privilege, so sometimes they have fallen in together in their perfection, even upon some of the best men that we read of: witness that great and signal example of Job, who, at one time, suffered the loss of all his children, of all his servants, of all his goods, of his great and honourable esteem among men, of his health; and, besides all this, lay under severe afflictions in his mind, and under the imputation of a hypocrite with his best and judicious friends.

Upon all this that hath been said, a man may, and, upon evident reason and experience, ought to

conclude, "That even the most sincere piety and integrity of heart and life cannot give any man any exemption or privilege from afflictions of some, or indeed of any kind."

And this consideration alone is sufficient, 1. To silence and quiet that murmuring, and unquiet, and proud distemper, that often ariseth in the minds of good men themselves, that are ready to think themselves much injured if they fall under the calamities incident to mankind: whereas, the just and wise God never gave any promise, or privilege, or exemption from external calamities and troubles to those whom yet he owns as his children. 2. This consideration is sufficient to quiet the minds of persons thus afflicted against the common temptation, which is apt to arise upon this occasion, as if they were hated or forsaken of God, because sorely afflicted: whereas most certainly the favour or love of God is not to be measured simply by externals, but rather the gospel teacheth us a quite contrary lesson, namely, that God is pleased to chasten those whom he loveth best. This consideration is sufficient to check the censorious humour that is in many, who, like the Barbarians, presently conclude that person or place to be more sinful than others, because they suffer more, it may be, than others, Acts xxviii. 4. This was the uncharitable, and indeed unreasonable, error of Job's friends of old, and of many at this time, in reference both to public and personal visitations.

2. The second good preparative against affliction; is a frequent practical supposition, wherewith we are to entertain ourselves, even in the time of our greatest prosperity. That the case may, and probably

will be altered with us; and so cast ourselves, as it were, into the mould of an afflicted condition. For instance, I am now in health; what if I were now to enter into the valley of the shadow of death, or into some acute, painful, or desperate disease? How am I fitted with patience, resignation of myself into the hand of God, and contempt of the world? For such an estate as this I must come to sooner or later; how shall I bear or carry myself in it, or under it, were it now upon me? I have now a plentiful estate, external affluence; what if, at this moment, I were bereft of all, either by fire or depredation, how were my mind fitted with humility and patience to submit to a poor, strait, wanting condition? I have now a good husband, wife, children, many friends that esteem me, and are faithful to me; what if God should in a moment deprive me of all these? what if my dearest friends should become my bitterest enemies, how should I bear myself under these changes? I have a great name and esteem in the world; what if, in a moment, a black cloud of infamy, and scorn, and reproach was drawn over it, and that I should become a scorn and reproach, with Job, among children of fools? yea, children of base men viler than the earth. How were I fitted with humility and evenness of mind to comport with such a condition, till it pleased God by his providence and manifestation of my innocence, if he think fit, to scatter this black cloud of calumny and reproach, or if not, yet quietly under it to enjoy the testimony of a good conscience and my own integrity? These, and the like anticipations of troubled and afflicted conditions, would habituate and fit our minds to

bear them; furnish us with suitable tempers for them; render them easy to us, when they come; and keep our souls in a due state of moderation and watchfulness before they come: as the good martyr Bilney before his martyrdom, by often putting his finger into the candle, made the flames, which he was after to endure, more familiar and tolerable.

3. The third preparative against affliction and calamitous seasons, is to reason ourselves off from overmuch love and valuation of the world, and the best things it affords. Philosophy hath made some attempt in this business; but the doctrine of the gospel hath given us far more noble and effectual topics and arguments, than any philosophy ever did or can: by giving us a plain and clear estimate and valuation of this world, and all that seems most valuable in it; but this is not all: by showing us plainly and clearly a more valuable, certain, and durable state after death, and a way of attaining it, with much more ease and contentment, than we can attain the most splendid temporals of this world. Certain it is, that the weight and stress of afflictions and crosses lie not so much in the things themselves, which we suffer in them or by them, as in that overvaluation that we put upon those conveniences which afflictions or crosses deprive us of. When news was brought to that noble Roman of the death of his son, it was a great pitch of patience that even the moral considerations wrought in him, Novi me genuisse mortalem; though perchance, it was not without a mixture of Stoical vainglory. too great a value upon our health, our wealth, our reputation; and that makes us unable to bear, with that evenness and contentedness of mind, the loss of them, by sickness, poverty, or reproach. We set too great a rate upon that temporal life here, because we set too great a value upon this world, to the enjoyment whereof this life is here accommodated and proportioned; and that makes us fear death, not only as the ruin of nature, but as that which puts a period to all our comforts: whereas, had we but faith enough to believe the evangelical truths, touching our future happiness, it would make us not desire death, because we might in the time of this life secure to ourselves that great and one thing necessary, and it would make us not to fear death, because we see a greater fruition to be enjoyed after it, than all the glory of this present world can yield.

4. The next preparative against afflictions is to keep piety, innocence, and a good conscience before it comes. As sin is the sting of death, so it is the sting of affliction; and that which indeed gives the greatest bitterness and strength to affliction: and the reason is this, because it weakens and disables that part in man which must bear and support it. This is what the wise man observes, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Which is no more than this: it is the mind and spirit of man, rightly principled, that doth bear and carry a man through those difficulties, and afflictions, and infirmities, under which he is; but if that spirit or mind, which should carry and bear those evils, be hurt, or wounded, or faint, or infirm, what is there left in a man to bear that indeed which should be our support? Innocence and a good conscience keeps the mind and spirit of a man in courage and confidence: and indeed it hath an influence, and suffrage, and attestation, and support from the God of heaven, to whom a good conscience can with an humble confidence appeal, as Hezekiah did under a great affliction, and this access to Almighty God doth give new supplies, succours, and strength to the soul to bear it up under very great and pressing afflictions. But, on the other side, sin doth disable the soul to bear affliction, till it be thoroughly repented of. 1. Because it doth in a great measure emasculate and weaken the spirit of a man, makes it poor, cowardly, and unable to bear itself up under the pressure of afflictions. 2. It doth in a great measure obstruct the intercourse between God and the soul, and that influence that might and would otherwise be derived to the spirit, or mind of a man, by the God of the spirits of all flesh.

Therefore, the best preparative against affliction is, to have the soul as clear as may be from the guilt of sin: 1. By an innocent and watchful life in the time of our prosperity, before affliction attack us.

2. Or, at least, by a speedy, sincere, and hearty repentance for sin committed; and this repentance to be speedy, before affliction come; for though it is true, that many times affliction is the messenger of God to awaken a sinner to repentance, and that repentance is accepted by the merciful God; yet that repentance is most kindly and easy, and renders afflictions less difficult and troublesome, which prevents afflictions, and performs one great end and use of affliction before it comes. He that hath a soul

cleansed by faith and repentance from the guilt of sin, before the severity of affliction comes upon him, hath but one work to do, namely, to fit himself with patience to undergo the shock of affliction; but he that defers his repentance, till driven to it by affliction, his work is more difficult, because it is double, namely, to begin his repentance, and to bear his affliction.

And because in many things we offend all, and the best have their failings and sins of daily incursion, a daily revising and examining of our own failings, and renewing of our repentance for our daily faults, is of singular use to render afflictions easy, because repentance cleanseth the soul, and renders a man in God's acceptation as if he had not offended.

5. The next preparative against affliction is to gain an humble mind. When affliction meets with a proud heart, full of the opinion of its own worth and goodness, there ariseth more trouble, and tumult, and disorder, and discomposure in the contest of such a heart against the affliction, than possibly can arise from the affliction itself; and the struggling of that distemper of pride with the affliction galls and entangles the mind more than the severest affliction, and renders a man very unfit for it, and unable to bear it. The prophet Isaiah describes it, "her sons at the head of every street were like a wild bull in a net." But, on the other hand, an humble, lowly mind, is calm and patient, and falls with ease upon an afflicted condition; for the truth is, the great evil of suffering is not so much in the thing a man suffers, as in the mind and temper of spirit of the man that meets with it; an humble mind is a mind rightly prepared with the greatest facility to receive the shock of any affliction, for such a mind is already as low as affliction can ordinarily set it.

And certainly, if any man consider aright, he hath many important causes to keep his mind always humble. 1. In respect of Almighty God, the great and glorious King of heaven and earth, whom, if a man contemplate, he will put his mouth in the dust, acknowledge himself to be but a poor worm, and therefore unworthy to dispute the divine dispensations, providences, or permissions. 2. In respect of himself: he that considers aright himself, his sins, and failings, and corruptions, will have cause enough to humble himself, and reckon that he is justly obnoxious to the severest crosses and afflictions. "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" It is mercy enough the affliction extends not yet so far as his life; a living man to complain, carries a reprehension in itself of the complaint.

6. Another most singular preparation against affliction, is a steady resolved resignation of a man's self to the will and good pleasure of Almighty God, and that upon grounds of the greatest reason imaginable. For, 1. It is a most sovereign will: for his will must be done whether we will or not: therefore, it is the highest piece of folly imaginable to contest with him, that will not, cannot, may not be controlled. It is true, we have commission to pray to him, to deliver us from evil; but when we have so done, we must withal desire that his will may be done; this pattern the Son of God hath given us,

"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not my will, but thine be done." Willingly, therefore, submit to that will, which, whether thou wilt or not, thou must, thou shalt endure; for his will is the most sovereign will, the will of the absolute monarch of heaven and earth. 2. As it is the most sovereign will, so it is the most wise will; what he wills, he wills not simply from sovereignty, but his will is founded upon and directed by a most infinite wisdom: and since thou canst not, upon any tolerable account, judge thy will wiser than his, it becomes thee to resolve thy poor, narrow, inconsiderate will into the will of the most wise God. 3. As it is a most wise will, so the will of God is most certainly the most beneficent and best will. What reason hast thou to suspect the beneficence of his will; whose will alone gave thee thy being, that he might communicate his goodness to that being of thine, which he freely gave thee? It is true, it may be thou dost not see the reason, the end, the use of his dispensations; yet be content with an implicit submission to resign thyself up to his disposal, and rest assured it shall be best for thee, though thou yet canst not understand what it means. If he hath given thee a heart to resign up thy will unto his, be confident he will never mislead thee, nor give thee cause to repent of trusting him. It was a noble pitch of a heathen's mind, namely Epictetus, "In every enterprise this ought to be our prayer: Guide me, O God, and thou divine Providence, according to thine own appointment; I will with cheerfulness follow: which, if I shall decline to do, I shall be an undutiful man, and yet shall nevertheless follow thy appointment, whether I will or not." But Christians have learned a reason of a nobler descent, namely, "That all things shall work together for good, to those that love God." And certainly there can be no greater evidence of thy love to him, than to make the will of God the guide, rule, and measure of thine own.

7. I shall conclude with that grand preparative, which is indeed the completion of all that is before said, and, in a few words, includes all: Labour to get thy peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. When this is once attained, thou art set above the love of the world, and the fear of afflictions, because thou hast the assurance of a greater treasure than this world can give or take away; "a kingdom that cannot be moved:" a hope and most assured expectation that is above the regions of afflictions, and that renders the greatest and sorest afflictions, as they are, namely, light and momentary: and yet because thou art, notwithstanding this glorious expectation, still in this lower region, and subject to passions and perturbations, and fears, the merciful God hath engaged his promise to support thee here under them; to better and improve thee by them; to carry thee through them by his all-sufficient grace and mercy: the strokes thou receivest are either managed and directed, or at least, governed and ordered by him that is thy Father, and that in very love and faithfulness doth correct thee; that hath a heart of compassion and love to thee, even when he seems in his providences to frown upon thee; that while thou art under them, will make them work together for thy good; and

that will never take from thee those everlasting mercies which are thy portion; that hath all thy afflictions, crosses, troubles, whatever they are or may be, under the infallible conduct of his own wisdom and power: and that as, on the one hand, he will never suffer thee to be afflicted beyond what he gives thee grace to bear and improve, so, on the other hand, he will so manage, order, and govern thy light afflictions, which are here but for a moment, that, in the end, they shall be a means to bring thee "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If, therefore, thou wouldst be soundly armed against afflictions, and prepared with ease and comfort to bear them, this one thing necessary is sufficient to render thee such, and to fit thee also with all those advantageous helps before-mentioned, which will necessarily follow upon this attainment.

II. I come to the second general head; namely, how afflictions incumbent upon us are to be received, entertained, and improved; and this will be, in a great measure, supplied by what hath been before said: for a mind so prepared and habituated, will be sufficiently qualified to receive and entertain them, as becomes a good man and a Christian. Nevertheless, I shall subjoin something, in order to the bearing and improving of afflictions while they are incumbent upon us; and they are these:

1. It becomes a man under afflictions, to have a very diligent, frequent, attentive, and right consideration concerning Almighty God; that he is a God of infinite wisdom, power, justice, mercy, and goodness; that he hates not any thing that he hath made, but hath a great love and beneficence to all

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his creatures; that he designs their good and benefit, even in those dispensations that seem most sharp and severe; that if he had not a good will to his creatures, he would never have done so much for them as he hath done; that, whilst he exerciseth discipline to the children of men, it is evident they are under his care; that oftentimes there is a greater severity of the divine displeasure, in his leaving mankind to themselves, than in exercising them with afflictions: and that he equally discovers the love and care of a Father in his corrections, as well as in his more pleasing administrations.

- 2. And farther, that afflictions rise not out of the dust, but are sent and managed by the wise disposition and arrangement of Almighty God: it is his providence that sends them, that measures out their kind, weight, and continuance: and that they are always, as commissioned by him, so under the conduct of his power, wisdom, and goodness, and never exceed the line and limits of his power, wisdom, and goodness: if he bids them go, they go; if he bids them return, they return: if he commands the most tumultuous storms of afflictions, "Peace, be still," there will be a calm. As mankind is never out of the reach of his power to afflict and correct, so it is never out of the reach of his power to relieve and recover.
- 3. That as no man hath an exemption from afflictions, so it is most evident, that even the best of men are visited with them, and it is but needful they should; for where one man is the worse by afflictions, a thousand are the worse for want of them, and as many the better by them: and the wise and

gracious God, that knows our frame better than we ourselves, doth, for the most part, in very faithfulness afflict us. The egresses of the divine counsels have ever in them a complication of excellent ends, even in afflictions themselves: they are acts of justice oftentimes to punish, and of mercy to prevent distempers and to heal them; and this is that lot which our blessed Lord bequeathed unto his own people, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." So that, a good man may have as great cause to suspect his own integrity in the absence of them, as in the suffering under them.

4. That all the divine dispensations of comforts or crosses, are so far beneficial or hurtful as they are received and used: comforts, if they make us thankful, sober, faithful, they become blessings; if they make us proud, insolent, secure, forgetful, they become judgments: afflictions, if they are received with humility, patience, repentance, and turning to God, they are blessings; if they are received with murmuring, impatience, incorrigibleness, they become judgments, and a forerunner of greater severity.

5. The consequences of all these considerations evidently lead us into these duties, whenever we are

under the pressure of affliction.

1. To receive it with all humility, as reached out to us from the hand, or permission at least, of Almighty God. There were a sort of philosophers that thought it a virtue to put on a resolved contempt of all crosses and afflictions, not to be moved at all with them, but to bear them with a stout apathy: this is not the temper that becomes a Christian; it is all one, as if a child should resolve to

receive the corrections of his father, with a stubborn resolution not to care for them, or to be affected with them; such a stubbornness under affliction renders it unuseful to its end, and commonly provokes the great Lord and Father of spirits totally to reject such a mind, or to master it with sharper and severer, and multiplied afflictions, till it yield, and till that uncircumcised heart be humbled, and accept of the punishment of its iniquity, Lev. xxvi. 41.

- 2. To receive it with patience and subjection of mind; and without either contesting with Almighty God, charging his providence with error or injustice, or swelling and storming against the affliction, or the divine dispensation that sends it: this hath two singular benefits; first, it renders the affliction itself more easy and tolerable; secondly, it is one of the readiest ways to shorten or abate it: for as yielding an humble submission to the hand of God, so patience and submission of will to the divine dispensation, are two of the great ends and the business of affliction, which, when attained by it, it hath performed a great part of its errand for which it was sent.
- 3. To return unto God that afflicteth or permiteth it: affliction misseth its end and use, when it drives a man from his God, either to evil or unlawful means, or to shift and hide himself, or keep at a distance from him; and as it loseth its end, so it is contrary to its natural effect, at least where it meets with a nature of any understanding or ingenuity. "In their affliction they will seek me early." God Almighty sends afflictions, like messengers, to call home wandering souls; and if a man will shift away,

get farther off, and estrange himself more from him that strikes him, he will either send more importunate messengers, afflictions of a greater magnitude, to call and fetch him, as want and famine did the young prodigal in the gospel; or, which is far worse, let him go without farther seeking him: whereas the man that by affliction, as it were at the first call, comes home to God, or gets nearer to him, for the most part prevents severer monitors, and renders his suffering more short, or at least more easy, by drawing near to God, the fountain of peace and deliverance.

And if the affliction befals such a man that hath not estranged himself from Almighty God; nor departed from him in any greater offences or backslidings, yet affliction is not without its end or use, even to such a man. Thou hast walked closely in thy duties towards God, hast depended upon him, approved thyself in his sight; yet is it not impossible that thy faith, industry, obedience, dependence, may be greater, more constant, more firm; if so it may be, as sure it may be, then, though affliction solicit not thy return to him from whom thou hast not departed, yet it solicits thy improvement.

4. To pray unto God: and this is the most natural effect of affliction, especially if it be severe and eminent. In the storm the sailors call every one upon his God; and the reason is, because in such a season, a man's own shifts, the help and advice and assistance of friends, and other human confidences, appear too weak and ineffectual; and therefore the man is driven to that which indeed is the unum magnum; namely, invocation of Almighty God, for

help, support, and comfort. It is therefore a sign of a desperate mind, that one will not come to God in prayer, at least when afflictions grind him. And although a man be not of the number of those that restrain prayer before God, yet afflictions naturally will make the prayer of such a man more earnest, fervent, constant; it sets an edge, and adds life to the prayers of a praying man.

5. To depend and trust upon God both for support under, and seasonable deliverance from, afflic-Keep thy recumbence upon his goodness and mercy, even under the blackest night of afflictions. "Though he kill me, yet will I trust in him:" and with David, even in the valley of the shadow of death, to rest upon his rod and his staff: and though it becomes the best of men to have a yielding and a soft spirit under the afflicting hand of God, yet be careful to bear up thyself under the power and goodness of God from fainting and despondence.

6. To be thankful to God under affliction, and that upon very great and important motives: 1. Thankful that they are no worse or greater: thou hast losses, but yet hast thou lost all at once? Job did; or if thou hast lost all externals, yet hast thou not something thou valuest more than all; namely, innocence, peace with God and thy own conscience? 2. Thankful that God Almighty rather chooseth to afflict thee, than to forsake thee. As long as Almighty God is pleased to afflict thee, it is plain, that thou art under his discipline, his care; no man's condition is desperate so long as the physician continues his administration; nor is any man wholly forsaken of God, nor past cure, so long as he is under affliction: for it is a medicine that, without thy own default, will either recover or better thee. 3. Thankful that God hath been pleased to discover so much of his mind, and design, and affections towards mankind in his word, as to assure us that the measure of his love towards, or displeasure against, the children of men, is not to be taken by external prosperity or adversity; but, on the contrary, to bear up our souls under the pressure of afflictions, assures us that they are the effects, for the most part, of his fatherly love and care, rather than of his heavy displeasure; that they may indeed sometimes be symptoms of his anger, but not of his hatred; they may be for corrections, but not for confusion: he may correct those, whom yet he accounts his children and resolves to save.

- 7. To put us upon a due search and examination of our hearts and ways. Certainly there is not the best man living, but upon a strict and impartial search of himself may find fuel for affliction; demerit enough to deserve it; somewhat amiss, that requires amendment; some corruptions growing into exorbitancy; some errors, that stand in need of physic to cleanse them; some budding disorders, that stand in need of a medicine to prevent them. The great business of affliction, the great message that it brings from God to man, is to search out and see what is amiss, what is defective; and to ransack our souls and hearts and lives, and search whether there be not something offensive to God.
- 8. To put man to a double duty upon this search: namely, if, upon an impartial scrutiny, thou find thy

conscience clear from great and wasting sins, humbly bless God for his grace, that hath preserved thee from the great transgression; but yet humble thyself for thy sins of daily incursion, for thy sins of omission, for the coldness in thy devotions, for thy want of vigilance over thy passions, for thy neglect of opportunities of doing good. As thou hast matter of thankfulness, for escaping those greater and wasting sins which others commit; so thou hast matter of humiliation and repentance, for those sins that are of a lesser magnitude, whereunto thy daily inadvertence and human frailty renders thee liable, and to set a stricter watch upon thyself even in reference to these. Again, on the other hand, if, upon search, thou find thyself guilty of any greater sin, which hath not been repented of, thy affliction brings likewise a double message unto thee. First, a message of humiliation and repentance for thy great transgression; and turning to God, with a perfect resolution of amendment; and a message of gratitude and thankfulness to God, that hath sent this messenger of affliction to awaken thee to repentance and amendment; and hath given thee an assurance of pardon and forgiveness upon thy repentance and amendment; through the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ Jesus. So that, whatsoever person affliction meets with, it brings with it a useful and profitable message from heaven: if it meet with a person under the guilt of some great unrepented sin, it brings him an errand of humiliation, repentance, amendment, and thankfulness; if it meet with a good man, such a man as Job, who had the witness of God in himself, that he was a perfect man and upright, yet it brings him

also a message of the like nature, a message of gratitude to that God, that hath preserved him from the great transgression; a message of humiliation and repentance for his often failings and offences; a message of advice to proceed with greater vigilance, and to a further degree of Christian perfection in the whole course of his life.

9. To wean a man from the love of the world, and to carry up the thoughts and hopes and desires to that country whereunto we are appointed. If all things went well, even with good men in this life, they would be building tabernacles here, and set up their rest and hopes on this side Jordan, as the Reubenites did in the country of Bashan, when they found it rich and fruitful. God Almighty therefore, in mercy, makes this world unpleasant to good men, by affliction, that they may set the less value upon it, and fix their hopes, and desires, and endeavours, for that city which is above.

This is the voice of the rod, and of him that hath appointed it, which every wise man ought to hear and answer with all obedience, submission, and thankfulness: and when affliction hath wrought this effect, its proper business is in a great measure ended; and for the most part it is thereupon eased or removed.

Above all the temptations that befal good men in afflictions, this commonly is that which doth most greatly prevail, and doth the most hurt; namely, when, upon a diligent search, they find their consciences clear from any great offences, they are too apt to magnify their own integrity, to expostulate the reasonableness and justice of the divine dealing

with them, and to complain of hard usage from him. This was Jacob's fault, and is too apt to be the fault of good men, though neither equal to him in their perfection nor afflictions: which course nevertheless is, 1. Very unjust and unreasonable; for the best of men have sins enough to justify the justice of God in his severest dealing with them; and corruptions enough to grow into greater enormities, which, although they perchance see not, yet the all-knowing God sees, and in mercy and with wisdom prevents, by the corrosives and cathartics of affliction; insomuch, that even that good man, when Almighty God opened his ear to discipline, saw and acknowledged, and therefore abhorred himself in dust and ashes. 2. As it is extremely unjust, so it is extremely foolish and vain: for as it is not the way to remove the affliction, so when God is pleased to remove it, in mercy and compassion, it makes a man justly ashamed upon his deliverance, of that folly and pettishness that he showed under his affliction against Almighty God, who even then had thoughts of mercy and deliverance for him. And this very consideration had been enough to have made Job's deliverance yet full of trouble and shame, for his frowardness in his affliction, unless the gracious God in a strange condescension of goodness and gentleness had prevented it, by giving so great a suffrage unto his integrity, and covering the errors and passionate excursions of his affliction, as a father doth the errors and follies of his child, by an indulgent commendation, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job."

And thus far for the carriage that becomes us to

have under affliction, and our due improvement of it, to the ends for which Almighty God sends it: by which Almighty God receives the honour of his sovereignty, his justice, his goodness, his wisdom, his truth; and man receives the benefit of prevention from sin, deliverance out of it, improvement of his graces, perfecting of his soul, and advancement of his glory, through the mercy of God, and his blessing upon this bitter cup, the cup of affliction.

III. I come to the third general consideration, namely, that temper and disposition of mind that becomes us to have upon, and after deliverance, from afflictions.

1. Upon our deliverance from afflictions, we ought, in a special and solemn manner, to return our humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God; to acknowledge him to be the author of it; to return to him our humble and serious praises, that he hath been pleased to answer our prayer, and hath given us a plain testimony that he hath a regard to us: this is the tribute that he expects most justly from us. As he in a special manner requires our prayers unto him, when we are under affliction, so he requires that we should take notice of the returns of our prayers, and to pay him the tribute of praise upon our deliverance: " Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." The truth is, when we are under extremities, we are easily persuaded to call to God for deliverance, the very natural pressure of affliction drives us to him, we know not whither else to fly: but as soon as the rod is gone, we are dull and backward in returning glory to God; and we are most apt to take

notice of the means that immediately went before: if we, or any of our relations, are delivered from sickness, we have it presently upon our tongues ends, that we had a careful or skilful physician, a strong constitution, favourable weather, some lucky accident that happened to us; and the like we are apt to do upon other deliverances, and rarely, or at least, not with that sincerity, acknowledge the mercy of God, and the hand of God, to be that which raised us up. It is true, means are not to be neglected: it is a presumption and tempting of God; but it is the providence of God that gives us means, and the blessing of God that makes them successful; that sometimes blesseth poor and weak and unlikely means to produce desired effects; sometimes maketh those very things we call accidents, that seem to import the very destruction of a man, to be the means of his recovery, and sometimes brings about the effect without any visible means. We are no less to acknowledge his goodness and influence, when we seem to be delivered by means, than if we were delivered by miracle. It is true, we are apt to fasten our thoughts and reasons upon means, because we see them: but if our eyes could be so opened as the prophet's servant's were, when he saw the chariots of fire in the mountain, we should see another kind of arrangement and government, and ordering and disposing of things than now we see. Many, if not most, of those signal deliverances, that a man or a nation hath, are wrought not so much by the efficacy of means, as by a secret invisible hand of providential government, which we see not. If, therefore, thou art delivered from any great distress of any kind, in

such a manner, that thou canst not attribute it to means, or possibly, above or beyond means, the hand of thy deliverer is more signal and conspicuous; glorify his mercy and goodness: and if thou dost obtain thy deliverance by means, yet still glorify his mercy and goodness; for it is his providence that sends means, his power and goodness that blesseth them to the desired success: the efficiency and energy of the principal cause is that which gives efficacy to the means, and makes them effectual.

2. Endeavour to express thy thankfulness by a sincere and faithful obedience to the will of that God that hath thus delivered thee. A true and hearty thankfulness of mind will not content itself with bare verbal praises and acknowledgments, but will study and endeavour to find out, and do all that may be well pleasing and delightful and acceptable to his great Benefactor: and wherever the heart is truly affected with the sense of the favour, goodness, and love of God, and that the deliverance it hath had is from his hand, it will think nothing too much to be done, that may be well pleasing to him. Great acclamations and verbal praises and acknowledgments, without an honest and sincere endeavour to please and obey him, are but a piece of mockery and hypocritical compliment; and a mere frustration and disappointment of Almighty God, in the end and design of his mercy to us; which is, to make us really better, more dutiful, more capable of greater and everlasting mercies; to make us better examples to others, who may thereby be invited to follow us in piety and goodness. A man that hath received great and signal mercies and deliverances,

becomes a great and efficacious example, and of much good, or much evil, according as he carries himself after eminent mercies received: if he become more pious, virtuous, just, sober than before, he becomes a more forcible motive and encouragement to others to be like him; again, if he either remain in, or degenerate into impiety, vanity, or vice, he discourageth goodness, and becomes a great temptation to others to be like him.

3. Take heed lest, after a great deliverance, thy heart be lifted up into presumption upon God, pride, and vainglory, and a conceit of thy own goodness and worth. This is the common temptation that grows upon much mercy received, and therefore the wise Lawgiver did very frequently caution the people of Israel against this: " Speak not in thine heart after the Lord thy God hast cast them out, saying, for my righteousness the Lord hath brought me to possess this land," &c. Let thy afflictions find thee humble, and let thy afflictions make thee more humble; but let thy deliverance yet increase thy humility; the more mercy God shows thee, the more humble ever let thy heart be, upon a double account: 1. Thy deliverances do, or should, make thee know Almighty God the more; and the more thou knowest him, the more humble it should make thee: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes have seen thee: wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." 2. Thou hast need to double thy guards of humility, because, upon great deliverance, thou must expect that the temptation and assaults of pride and vainglory will be most busy with thee: and, if in all thy preparations for

afflictions thou hast studied humility; if under all thy afflictions thou hast improved thy humility; yet if now, upon thy deliverance, thou art lost in pride and vainglory, thou hast lost all the benefit both of thy preparations, and of thy afflictions, and of thy deliverances also: thou art like an unhappy ship that hath endured the sea, and hath borne the storm, and yet sinks when she is come into the harbour.

4. And upon the same account be vigilant and watchful. It is true, thou hast weathered a great storm, out of which, by the mercy of God, thou art delivered; but still be on thy guard, thou knowest not how soon thou shalt meet with another; take heed it surprise not thee unprovided. Though-thou hast endured, it may be, a long and dark storm of affliction, and God hath mercifully delivered thee; yet thou hast no promise from Almighty God that thou shalt meet with no more. These three considerations should keep thee watchful and vigilant, notwithstanding great deliverance from great afflictions: 1. Thou art thereby better fitted and prepared to receive it; if it come it shall not surprise thee unawares, nor find thee sleeping. 2. Most certainly, if any thing be a more likely means to preserve thee under so great affliction, it is a prepared, watchful, vigilant mind: for, if I may so speak, afflictions have no great business with such a man; for he is already in that posture and frame of heart, that affliction is ordinarily sent to give a man. 3. There is nothing more likely to procure affliction than security and unpreparedness of mind: and that, First, In respect of the goodness, mercy, and justice of God, who, though with most unblameable justice, yet with singular mercy, is very likely to send affliction to awaken him and amend him, and to recal him from that tendency to apostacy that security is apt to bring upon him. Secondly, In respect of the malice and vigilancy of the great enemy of mankind; who, as he never wants malice, so he often gets a permission to worry a man whom he hath under this disadvantage of unpreparedness and security.

5. Be careful to keep, as great afflictions, so also great deliverances, in memory. Most men, upon the fresh receipt of mercy and deliverance, have a quick and lively apprehension of it; and, accordingly, their affections of thankfulness, and practices and purposes of obedience, are lively and diligent; but, in process of time, and as the man is further distant from his deliverance, so the memory of it doth gradually, and possibly suddenly, vanish and decay: and as the remembrance of the deliverance decays, and grows weaker and weaker, so do these affections or dispositions of the soul that are before-mentioned: the thankfulness grows faint, and so doth the obedience, and so doth the humility, and so doth the watchfulness; and as the water that hath been heated, being removed from the fire, grows by degrees colder and colder, till at last it comes to its old coldness that it first had; so in a little time the affliction is forgot, and the deliverance is forgot, and the man is grown into the very same state, as if he never had felt either, and possibly worse. Therefore, keep deliverances and afflictions too, fresh in thy memory, call thyself frequently to account for them; use some expedient that may frequently re-

mind thee of them with all their circumstances; set them down in writing; mention them often; recollect them often; and recollect what thoughts, purposes, temper of mind and spirit, was then upon thee, when thy afflictions were upon thee, or thy deliverances freshly given to thee. Consider with thyself how if these were now as fresh to thee as they were then, with what motions or dispositions of soul thou shouldst receive them; and reason thyself into the same temper and habitude of thankfulness, as then By thus keeping the memory of these thou hadst. afflictions, and these deliverances, fresh under all their circumstances, thou wilt with them, and in the same degree as thy remembrance is of them, revive and excite, and preserve and keep alive, and quick and active, the same gratitude, the same humility, the same obedience, the same vigilance that these afflictions or these deliverances wrought in thee, when they were fresh with thee or upon thee. vigorous perpetuating of the remembrance of them will be an effectual means to perpetuate the due fruit of them in their life, vigour, and intention.

CONTENTMENT.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 11.

" For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

THERE are three excellent virtues, which especially refer to our condition in this life, and much conduce to our safe and comfortable passage through it.

- 1. Equality of mind, or equanimity.
- 2. Patience.
- 3. Contentedness.
- 1. Equality of mind, or equanimity, is that virtue which refers both to prosperity and adversity, whereby, in all conditions of that kind, we carry an even and equal temper, neither overmuch lifted up by prosperity, nor overmuch depressed in adversity.
- 2. Patience properly refers to crosses, disappointments, afflictions, and adversity, whereby we carry a quiet and submissive mind, without murmuring, passion, or discomposure of spirit, in all afflictions, whether sickness, loss of friends, poverty, reproach, disgrace, or the like.
- 3. Contentment; which differs from equality of mind, because that respects as well prosperity as ad-

versity; this only adversity; and in some respects differs also from patience, though this always accompanies it. 1. In the extent of the object: for patience respects all kinds of affliction; contentedness, in propriety of speech, respects principally the affliction of want or poverty. 2. In the act itself: for patience, in propriety of speech, implies only a quiet, composed toleration of the evil of adversity; but contentedness imports somewhat more, namely, not only a quietness of mind, but a kind of cheerful, free submission to our present condition of adversity, a ready compliance with the divine providence, and, in effect, a choice of that state wherein the divine dispensations place us, as well as the bearing of it.

These, though they may, in strictness, give a distinction between patience and contentment, yet we must observe that contentment is never without patience, though it be something more; and that, in the common acceptation and latitude of the word, contentment doth not only extend to the condition or affliction of poverty, but even to all other outward afflictions reached to us by the inflicting or permitting hand of divine providence; and in this large acceptation I shall here apply and use it.

Content, therefore, in its large acceptation, is not only a quiet and patient, but also a free and cheerful closing with that estate and condition of life, which the divine dispensation shall allot to us, whether mean, or poor, or laborious and painful, or obscure, or necessitous, or sickly, or unhealthy, or without friends, or with loss or absence of friends, or any other state that seems ungrateful to our nature or disposition. For we need not apply this virtue to a state of high

prosperity in all things, wherein, though men are not ordinarily contented, yet they have but small temptations to discontent from the state itself wherein they are.

This lesson of contentment was learned by the Apostle, which imports these things: 1. That it is a lesson that is possible to be learned; for the Apostle had learned it. 2. That it is a lesson that requires industry and pains to acquire it, for he learned it before he attained it. 3. That it is a lesson that deserves the learning, for he speaks of it as a thing of learning and great use, well worth the pains he took to attain it. And the truth is, it is of so great importance to be learned, that without it we want the comfort of our lives, and with it, all conditions of life are not only tolerable, but comfortable. And hence it is, that this excellent Apostle doth very often inculcate, and press, and commend, this lesson in many of his epistles. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Again, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

I shall therefore set down these reasons, that may persuade and encourage us to contentment with our condition, and likewise to patience under it; for patience and contentment cannot be well severed. And the reasons are of two sorts: 1. Moral; 2. Divine and evangelical. For I shall not decline the use of moral reasons, considering how far, by the help of these, many heathers (that had not the true knowledge of God revealed in his

word and Son) advanced in the practice of these virtues. The moral reasons, therefore, are these:

- 1. Very many of the external evils we suffer are of our own choice and procurement, the fruits of our own follies, inadvertence, and averseness to good counsel; and why should we be discontented, or impatient under those evils which we ourselves have chosen, or repine because those trees bear their natural fruit?
- 2. The greater part of the evils we suffer are of that nature and kind, that are not in our power either .to prevent or help; some come from the very condition of our nature, as sickness, death of friends; and of absolute necessity, the more relations any man hath, the more evils of this kind he may suffer; and can we reasonably expect that the very nature of things should be changed to please our humours? Again, some come from the hands of men, that, it may be, are more powerful, more subtle, and malicious: why should we discontent ourselves, or be impatient, because others are too strong for us? others again come by occurrences natural, (though disposed by the hand of the divine providence) as losses by storms and tempests, by unseasonable weather, by intemperateness of the air or meteors; can we reasonably expect that the great God of heaven and earth should alter his settled laws of nature for the conveniences of every such little worm as you or I am? It may be that storm or intemperate season, that may do you or me some prejudice, may do others a benefit; that wind that strikes my ship against the rock, may fetch off two or more from the sands. Let us be content, therefore, to

suffer Almighty God to govern the world according to his wisdom, and not our will, though it may be a particular detriment to you or to me; or if we repine against it, we must not think thereby to obtain our own wills.

- 3. The texture and frame of the world is such, that it is absolutely necessary, that if some be rich and powerful, or great, or honourable, others must be poor, and subject, and ignoble; if all were equally powerful, there would be no power nor government, because all would be equal; if all were equally rich, it would be but only nominally; indeed none wouldbe rich, but all would be poor; there could be no artificers, no labourers, no servants. Since, therefore, it is of necessity, in the order of the world, that some must be poor, or less rich or powerful than others, why should I be so unreasonable or unjust, to desire that the lot of poverty or lowness of condition should be another's and not mine? or why should not I be contented to be of the lower sort of men, since the order of the world requires that such some must be?
- 4. Let any man observe it when he will, he shall find, that whatsoever of worldly advantages any man doth most plentifully enjoy, and most men most greedily desire, of necessity he must thereby have more crosses and afflictions. A man desires many children, friends, relations; the more he hath of these, the more mortal dying comforts he hath; the more he hath that must be sick, and suffer affliction, and die; and every one of these afflictions or losses in a man's relations, are so many renewed afflictions, and crosses to himself. A man desires wealth, and

hath it; the more cares and fears he hath; and the more he hath, the more he hath to lose, and of necessity, he must have more losses the more he hath; as he that hath a thousand sheep, must, in probability, lose more in a year than he that hath but forty; and besides, wealth is the common mark that every man shoots at, and every man will be pulling somewhat from him that hath much, because every man thinks he hath enough for others as well as himself. A man desires honour, power, grandeur, and he hath them: but every man envies him, and is ready to unhorse him; and a small neglect, reproach, or misfortune, sits closer to such a man, than to a meaner man; and the more of honour or power he hath, the more of such breaches he shall be sure to meet with. A man desires long life, and accordingly enjoys it; but in the tract of long life, a man is sure to meet with more sickness, more crosses, more loss of friends and relations, and overlives the greatest part of his external comforts, and in old age becomes his own burden.

- 5. If a man desires much wealth or power, and enjoys it; yet it is certain so much the more thereof he hath, so much the less others have; for he hath that which might otherwise he divided among many; why therefore should a man desire it, or discontent himself if he have it not, since what he thus enjoys is with another's detriment and loss, who would have a share in it, if he had it not alone? And why should I covet that, or be discontented if I have it not; since, if I have it, I shall procure the like discontent in others?
 - 6. It is certain in the course of the world, there

are, and must be, a greater number of crosses and troubles, and of greater moment, than there are of external comforts; nay, there is scarcely any comfort that any man hath, but, like Jonah's gourd, it hath a worm gnawing at the root of it, which doth not only wither the comfort itself, but most times creates greater trouble and sorrow, than the comfort itself hath good if entirely enjoyed. A man hath many children, it may be they are all very good and hopeful, yet they are mortal, and if they die, the death of such a child is so much the more grievous, by how much the more good and towardly he was. But if any of them prove vicious, foolish, and naughty, by how much a child is nearer than a stranger, by so much the more his vices give trouble, sorrow, and care to his parent; so that in all worldly things, the stock of trouble is greater, three to one, than that of comforts; so true is that saying of Job, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." Why, therefore, should a man sink into discontent, because the world doth but follow its own natural complexion and state?

7. We are generally greatly mistaken in the nature of good and evil, and have not the true measures of them. That is truly relative good, which makes a man the better, and that truly evil in its relative nature, which makes a man the worse. If prosperity and success make me thankful, watchful, charitable, beneficent, then is prosperity good to me, for it makes me better; but if it make me proud, haughty, insolent, domineering, vain-glorious, it is evil to me. If adversity make me clamorous, murmuring, envious, spiteful, injurious, then it is evil

to me; but if it makes me humble, sober, patient, then it is good to me. And let any man impartially take the measure of the very same man, or divers men in each condition, he shall find ten to one receive more mischief by prosperity than by adversity. Why should I then not content myself with that condition which is more safe to me, and makes me the better man, though not the richer or greater?

8. Which is but a farther explication of what is said before. It is certain, that a good man is like the elixir, it turns iron into gold, and makes the most sour condition of life not only tolerable, but useful and convenient. If I be such, I mould and frame my worst condition into a condition of comfort and contentment by my patience and contentment. Why should I then be discontented with my condition, since, by the grace of God, I am able to make it what I please? If I can content myself with the good temper and disposition of my own heart and soul, I have no reason to be discontented with my condition, for if I find it not good, I can make it such by the equality, patience, and temper of my own mind: and that the mind is the principal matter in content or discontent, we need no other instances than those of Ahab and Haman; the one a great king, the other a great favourite of a mighty monarch, full of wealth and honour; yet a covetous mind in one, and a proud mind in the other, made the former seek for a little spot of ground, and the latter grow to so high a degree of discontent for want of the knee of a poor Jew, that it withered all his enjoyments.

9. Discontent and impatience galls a thousand

times more than the cross or affliction doth. We owe more of the evil of crosses, troubles, and afflictions, to the unquiet, restless, impatient distemper of our mind, than to them. We are like men in a fever, that infinitely increase their heat by their tossing and tumbling, more than if they lay still, and then they complain of the uneasiness of their bed: like the prophet's wild bull in a net, we entangle and tire ourselves worse with our struggling, than if we were more patient and still; or like the ship, it is not broken by the rock, but by its own violent motion against it. Why then should I disquiet myself with my condition, when I make it and myself thereby worse and more uneasy?

- 10. As my discontentedness and unquietness renders my condition the more uneasy, so it no way conduceth to my rescue from it: for since I cannot be so brutish as to think that the occurrences which befal men are without a divine conduct; so it is certain, that all his dispensations are wise, and directed to a wise end; and even afflictions themselves have their errand and business, to make men more humble, watchful, and considerate. If I correct my child for his fault, and he continue still more stubborn, I shall correct him longer, till he return to his submissiveness and duty. Why, then, should I discontent myself, and be impatient under my affliction, when it is not only vain and fruitless, thereby to expect deliverance, but, in all probability, the likeliest way to keep me still under it?
- 11. As thus my condition is not amended, but made the worse, more severe and lasting, by my impatience and discontent, so patience and contentment

will give me these great advantages: 1. In all probability it will shorten my affliction, because it hath obtained its effect and end, and the message it brings is duly answered. 2. But, howsoever, it will make it infinitely more easy, the less I struggle under it. 3. And, which is the best of all, it gives me the possession of my own soul, internal peace and tranquillity of mind, a kind and comfortable serenity of spirit. I remain master of my passions, of my intellect, of myself, and am not transported into another thing than what becomes a reasonable man: though there be storms and tempests and rolling seas without me, yet all is calm and quiet within. Contentment and patience render my outward condition of little concern to me, so long as it gives me the opportunity to possess and enjoy myself, my virtue and goodness, and the attestation of a good conscience.

12. Though I want somewhat that others have, yet it is ten to one, that I have somewhat that many as good, if not better, want. It may be I want wealth, yet I have health; it may be I want health, yet I have children that others want. I will learn contentment by considering others' wants and my enjoyments, and not learn discontent from others' enjoyments, and my own wants.

These are the moral considerations, and truly they are of great weight, moment, and use; and, as I said, carried the heathen a great way in the virtues of contentment and patience: but yet they oftentimes failed, and were too weak to compose the mind under a storm of crosses, losses, and afflictions; and, therefore, Almighty God hath furnished us with a more excellent way; which lets me into the second con-

sideration, namely, the divine and evangelical helps to patience and contentment. Their number will not be so many as the former, but their weight and efficacy greater, and they are such as these:

- 1. The worst I here suffer is less than I deserve; and the least that I enjoy is more than I can in justice expect; it is the gift and bounty of God. I have reason to be content and thankful for the least mercy, and to be patient and quiet under my greatest evil.
- 2. There is no affliction, cross, or condition of life, but is reached out to us from the hand or permission of the most glorious Sovereign of all the world, to whom we owe an infinite subjection, because we have our being from him: and therefore, it is but just and reasonable for us to content ourselves with what he is pleased thus to inflict: and the greatest cross or affliction of this life, is not equal to his bounty and goodness in giving us a being.
- 3. He is not only the absolute sovereign of us, and all the world, but he is the most just and wise governor of it, and all men, and all the dispensations of his government are directed to most just, wise, and excellent ends: and therefore, we have all imaginable reason, not only patiently to submit, but cheerfully and contentedly to bear any condition that he dispenseth, and with an implicit faith, to resign our wills to his, as being assured it is infinitely more wise and just than ours. Sometimes they are the acts of his justice to punish us for some past offence, but always the acts of his wisdom, either to try us, or reclaim us; to prevent us from worse evils, or to amend us; to make us more humble, watchful, duti-

ful, circumspect; to draw us off from too much resting on the world; to make us bethink ourselves of our duty, and of returning to him by repentance, faith, and obedience.

- 4. He is not only a wise and just Governor, but a most merciful and tender Father; and one that out of very faithfulness, love, and goodness, corrects us, as a father doth his son whom he entirely loveth: and upon this account he may rest assured, 1. That he never afflicts, or sends, or permits, any cross to fall upon us, but it is for our everlasting, and many times for our temporal good. 2. That no cross or affliction shall lie longer or heavier upon us, than is conducible to our good. 3. That he doth, and will always, send along his staff with his rod, his grace with his affliction, to tutor and instruct us, to support and comfort us; and if we find not this support in our greatest affliction, it is not because it is wanting to us, but because we are wanting to it, to lay hold upon it, to improve it.
- 5. For our farther assurance of his love to us, and care of us, we have the word of the great Monarch of the world, the mighty, faithful, and all-sufficient God: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
- 6. He hath given us the greatest pledge of his love and goodness, that the most doubting or craving heart in the world could ever desire; his Son to be our sacrifice: and how shall he not with him give us all things needful, useful, and beneficial?

This Son of his he made the Captain of our salvation, and yet he made him a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and made perfect by suffering.

And this Son of God did bear all, not only with patience, but with resignation and contentment of mind: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" And when all was done, "Jesus, that was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, was crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings:" and this was done (besides that expiatory sacrifice thereby made for us) for these admirable ends: 1. That we might see before us the ordinary method of the divine dispensation, his own eternal Son, that knew no sin, yet was made a man of sorrows: and then, why should we, poor sinful men, expect to be exempted and privileged more than the eternal Son, in whom God from heaven proclaimed himself well pleased? 2. That we might have an example before us: he, that is made the Captain of our salvation, was likewise to be the common pattern and image, whereunto all his disciples and followers are to be conformed, both passively and actively; he was exhibited as the first-born among many brethren: the common image, according to which all his disciples and followers should be conformed, Rom. viii. 29. As he was made perfect by sufferings, so must we; and as he, through a vale of sufferings, passed into glory, so must we; that if we suffer with him, we may be glorified with him: he was exhibited, as the common standard and pattern of a Christian's

condition, in the lowest estate that can befal him in this life: and surely we have reason to be contented to be conformed, and subject to the condition of the Captain of our salvation. 3. That as he was thus exhibited as a passive example of our conformity, so he became an active example for our imitation; full of quietness, composedness, submission, patience, and contentment, to give us an example, and to imprint upon us the same temper and frame of mind, that whilst we behold his example, we may, by a secret sympathy, be transformed, as it were, into the same mould and image. 4. That we might have this great pledge and assurance, that he who once lived in this world, and had experience of the difficulties and troubles of it, and is now translated to the right hand of the glorious majesty of God, and hath the prospect of all our wants, and needs, and sorrows, and troubles, and sufferings, and of the degrees of strength we have to bear it, and hath the plenitude of power to support, to strengthen and deliver us: I say, that we may be assured, that he is a merciful and faithful high-priest, sensible, and compassionate of our condition: "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Thus it hath pleased the goodness of Almighty God, (who knows our frame, and considers that we are but dust,) to use as much indulgence and compliance, as is possible for a most tender father to his weak and froward children; and since he knows afflictions and crosses are as necessary for us as the very best of our blessings, he also gives us all the helps and supplies that are imaginable, with the

greatest suitableness to our nature, to make them easy, supportable, and profitable; and to enable us to bear them, with the greatest patience and contentment. We cannot be without them, for then we are very apt to grow proud and secure, self-conceited, insolent, to set up our rest, and be building of tabernacles here, to dread and fear death beyond all measure, and to be utterly unprovided for it, to be desirous to take our portion in this life, and to make our heaven on this side death; as the two tribes desired their lot on this side Jordan, because they found it convenient. And though we cannot well be without them, yet we stand in need of daily helps to bear them patiently, contentedly, and profitably; and we are accordingly, by the divine goodness, furnished with helps suitable to our condition and frame.

As all the afflictions, crosses, and troubles, in this life, are managed by the wise providence and government of the most wise and merciful God, and have their voice, errand, and message from him to us; " Hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it:" so, he hath given us the inestimable jewel of his word, to expound and unriddle what he means by them, and to instruct us how to carry ourselves under them; how to improve them all for our spiritual and everlasting good; how with patience and cheerfulness to undergo them; how to be drawn the nearer to God by them. And to this end he hath given us most divine and wise counsels touching them; great assurance of his love, goodness, and the light of his countenance, to carry and conduct us with comfort and dependence upon him in them; and hath given

us admirable examples, which are so many commentaries and expositions upon them, and to show us what he means and intends in them and by them: as the examples of the Jewish church and people; the examples of his best saints and servants, and their sufferings and the reasons of them, and their deportment under them, and wherein they failed, and wherein they benefited by them; as Abraham, Job, Moses, David, Hezekiah, Josiah, and all the Apostles and primitive Christians: in whom we may, with great clearness and satisfaction, observe how much advantage they got by their afflictions; what losses they were at by their peevishness, frowardness, and discontent with their afflicted condition; what comfort, satisfaction, and benefit they attained by their patience, quietness, equality of mind, voluntary submission to the divine providence, and contentment with their estates, though ever so troublesome and uneasy.

But above all, the bountiful God hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: he hath given us the clearest conviction imaginable that this world, and our life in it, is not our principal end and scope, but the place of our pilgrimage; at best, our inn, not our home; our place of trial and preparation for a better state: he hath showed us that it is but our passage, and such a passage as must and shall be accompanied with affliction, and it may be with persecution, by evil men, evil angels, evil occurrences: that it is the place of our warfare; a troublesome and tumultuous stormy sea, through which we must pass before we come to our haven: that our country, our home, our place of rest and

happiness, lies on the other side of death, where there shall be no sorrow, nor trouble, nor fears, nor dangers, nor afflictions, nor tears; but a place of eternal and unchangeable comfort, fulness of most pure and uninterrupted pleasures, and that for evermore: that through many tribulations and afflictions we must enter into that kingdom, as his ancient people entered into their Canaan through a Red Sea, a tiresome and barren wilderness, fiery serpents, wants, enemies, and uninterrupted dangers and difficulties: that "our light afflictions, which are but here for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Our afflictions and inconveniences in this world, 1. Are light in comparison of that exceeding, far more exceeding weight of glory. 2. As they are but light, so being compared with that eternal weight of glory, they are but for a moment: the longest life we here live is not ordinarily above threescore and ten years; and though the more troublesome and uneasy that life is, the longer it seems, yet compared with the infinite abyss of eternity, it is but a moment, yea, less than a moment, if less can be, yet such is the longest stay in this life if compared with eternity.

And the gracious God hath presented this greatest, and most important truth to us with the greatest evidence and assurance that the most desponding and suspicious soul can desire. 1. He hath given his own word of truth to assure us of it. 2. He hath given his own Son to seal it to us, by the most powerful and convincing evidence imaginable: by his mission from heaven on purpose to tell us it; by his miracles; by attestations from heaven; by the

laying down his own life in witness of it; by his resurrection and ascension; by the miraculous mission of his Holy Spirit, visibly and audibly. Again, 3. He hath confirmed it to us, by the doctrine and miracles of his Apostles, by their death and martyrdom, as a witness of the truth they taught; by the numerous converts, and primitive Christians, and godly martyrs, who all lived and died in this faith, and for it: who made it their choice rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, declaring plainly that they sought a better city and country, that is, a heavenly; and this country, and this city, they had in their eye, even while they lived in this troublesome world: and this prospect, this hope, and expectation, rendered this lower world of no great value to them, the pleasures thereof they esteemed but low, and little, and the troubles and uneasiness thereof they did undergo patiently, cheerfully, and contentedly; for they looked beyond them, and placed their hopes, their treasure, their comfort above them. And even whilst they were in this life, yet they did, by their faith and hope, anticipate their own happiness, and enjoyed it by faith, even before they actually possessed it by fruition; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for," and makes those things present, by the firmness of a sound persuasion, which are in themselves future and to come.

And this is that, which will have the same effect with us, if we live and believe as they did; and be but firmly and soundly persuaded of the truth of the gospel, thus admirably confirmed to us. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

"The just shall live by faith." "We live by faith, and not by sight." And excellent is that passage to this purpose: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

And therefore, if we do but seriously believe the truth of the gospel, the truth of the life to come, the best external things of this world will seem but of small moment to take up the choicest of our desires or hopes, and the worst things this world can inflict will appear too light to provoke us to impatience or discontent. He that hath but heaven and everlasting glory in prospect, and a firm expectation, will have a mind full of contentment in the midst of the lowest and darkest condition here on earth; impatience and discontent never can stay long with us, if we awaken our minds, and summon up our faith and hope in that life and happiness to come. Sudden passions of impatience and discontent, may, like clouds, arise and trouble us for a while, but this faith, and this hope, rooted in the heart, if stirred up, will, like the sun, scatter and dispel them, and cause the light of patience, contentment, and comfort, to shine through them.

And as we have the hope of immortality and blessedness set before us, so the means and way to attain it are easy and open to all; no person is ex-

cluded from it, that wilfully excludes not himself. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, without money and without price." "Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The way to everlasting happiness, and consequently to contentment here, is laid open to all. It was the great reason why God made mankind, to communicate everlasting happiness to them; and when they wilfully threw away that happiness, it was the end why he sent his Son into the world, to restore mankind to it. And as the way is open to all, so is it easy to all; his yoke is easy and his burden is light. The terms of attaining happiness, if sincerely endeavoured, are easy to be performed, by virtue of that grace that Almighty God affords to all men, that do not wilfully reject it: namely, to believe the truth of the gospel, so admirably confirmed; and sincerely to endeavour to obey the precepts thereof, which are both just and reasonable, highly conducing to our contentment in this life, and consummating our happiness in the life to come: and for our encouragement in this obedience, we are sure to have, if we desire it, his special grace and blessed Spirit to assist us; and a merciful Father to accept of our sincerity, and a gracious Saviour to pardon our failings and deficiencies. So that the way to attain contentment in this life, and happiness in the life to come, as it is plain and certain, so it is open and free, none is excluded from it, but it is free and open to all that are but willing to use the means to attain it.

And I shall wind up this long discourse touching contentment, with this plain and ordinary instance. I have before said that our home, our country is heaven and everlasting happiness, where there are no sorrows, nor fears, nor troubles, that this world is the place of our travel, and pilgrimage, and, at the best, our inn: now, when I am in my journey, I meet with several inconveniences; it may be the way is bad and foul, the weather tempestuous and stormy; it may be I meet with some rough companions, that either turn me out of my way, or dash and dirt me in it, yet I content myself, for all will be mended when I come home: but if I chance to lodge at my inn, there, it may be, I meet with bad entertainment, the inn is full of guests, and I am thrust into an inconvenient lodging, or ill diet, yet I content myself, and consider it no other than what I have reason to expect, it is but according to the common condition of things in that place; neither am I solicitous to furnish my lodgings with better accommodations, for I must not expect to make long stay there, it is but my inn, my place of repose for a night, and not my home; and therefore I content myself with it as I find it, all will be amended when I come home. In the same manner it is with this world; perchance I meet with an ill and uncomfortable passage through it, I have a sickly body, a narrow estate, meet with affronts and disgraces, lose my friends, companions, and relations, my best entertainment in it is but troublesome and uneasy: but yet I do content myself; I consider it is but my pilgrimage, my passage, my inn; it is not my country, nor the place of my rest: this kind of usage or condition is but according to the law and custom of the place, it will be amended when I come home: for in my Father's house there are many mansions; many mansions instead of my inn, and my Saviour himself hath not disdained to be my harbinger; he is gone thither before me, and gone to prepare a place for me. I will therefore quiet and content myself with the inconveniences of my short journey, for my accommodations will be admirable when I come to my home, that heavenly Jerusalem, which is the place of my rest and happiness.

But yet we must withal remember, that though heaven is our home, the place of our rest and happiness, yet this world is a place for our duty and employment, and we must use all honest and lawful means to preserve our lives and our comforts by our honest care and diligence. And as it is our duty to wait the time till our Lord and Master calls, so it is part of our task in this world given us by the great Master of the family of heaven and earth, to be employed for the temporal good of ourselves and others. It is indeed our principal business to fit ourselves for our everlasting home, and to think of it; but it is a part of our duty, and an exercise of obedience, while we are here, to employ ourselves with honesty and diligence in our temporal employments: though we are not to set our hearts upon the conveniences of this life, yet we are not to reject them, but use them thankfully and soberly; for they are blessings that deserve our gratitude, though they ought not entirely to take up our hearts. Again, though crosses and afflictions must be the

exercise of our patience, we must not wilfully choose them, nor run into them. Let God be still the Master of his own dispensations, for he is wise, and knows what is fit for us, when we know not what is fit for ourselves. When he sends them, or permits them, our duty is patience and contentment; but commonly our own choice is headstrong and foolish.

It was the error of many new converts to Christianity, who thought, that, when heavenly-mindedness was pressed, presently they must cast off all care of the world, desert their callings, and busily and unnecessarily thrust themselves into dangers, that so they might be quit of all worldly care and business, and of life itself. This the Apostles frequently reprove, and show the error of it, and that justly: for the truth is, our continuance in this life, and in our honest employments and callings, our thankful use of external blessings here, and our honest endeavours for them; the endeavour to do good in our places, so long as we continue in them; our prudent prevention of external evils, are part of that obedience we owe to our Maker, and part of that exercise or task that is given us by him to perform in this life; and our cheerful, faithful, diligent conversation herein, is so far from being incompatible with Christianity, that it is part of our Christian duty, and of that service we owe to our Maker; and it is indeed the exercise of our patience, and the evidence of a contented mind: for whosoever grows so weary of the world, that presently, with froward Jonah, he wisheth to die, or throws off all, it is a sign of the want of that contentment that is here commended; because true contentment consists

in a cheerful and ready compliance with the will of God, and not in a froward preference of our own will or choice. It was part of our Saviour's excellent prayer for his disciples, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

The business, therefore, of these papers, is to let you see what are the helps to attain patience and contentment in this world, that our passing through it may be safe and comfortable, and agreeable to the will of God; and to remedy that impatience and discontent which is ordinarily found among men; to teach men how to amend their lives, instead of being weary of them; and to make the worst conditions in the world easy and comfortable, by making the mind quiet, patient, and thankful. For it is the discontented and impatient mind that truly makes the world much more uneasy than it is in itself.

JACOB'S VOW:

OR THE

MODESTY AND REASONABLENESS OF JACOB'S DESIRE.

GENESIS XXVIII. 20, 21.

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

The only thing that I intend to consider upon this place of Holy Scripture, is the "modesty and reasonableness of Jacob's desire." He doth not desire greatness of wealth, or honour, or power, or splendour, or great equipage in this world; but all that he desires in reference to this world, is, 1. That the comfortable presence, and the sense of the favour and love of God should be with him: "If God will be with me." 2. That the protection of the divine Providence may be continually over him: "and will keep me in the way that I go." 3. That he would supply him, not with curiosities or delicacies, but with necessaries: "and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on."

And the truth is, this should be the rule and measure of every good man, in reference to this life,

and the enjoyments of it, and the desires of them, until he come to his father's house in peace; that house, wherein there are many mansions, that the great Father, of whom all the family in heaven and earth is named, hath provided for such as fear, and love, and obey him.

Indeed the two former of these, though they be no more than what the bountiful God freely affords to all that truly love him, and depend upon him, are of a strange and vast extent. 1. The comfortable presence of God supplies abundantly all that can be desired by us, and abundantly countervails whatsoever else we seem to want; it is better than life itself: and when the ancients would express all that seemed beneficial or prosperous in this life, they had no fuller and more comprehensive expression of it, than that God was with him; as of Joseph: "And when his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper." The wisdom, and courage, and success of David, is resolved into this one thing, "The Lord was with him."

But certainly, though the divine presence should not manifest itself in external successes and advantages, the very sense of the favour and comfortable presence of God carries with it an abundant supply of all other deficiences, Psal. iv. 6, 7. The light of the countenance of Almighty God is the most supereminent good, and occasions more true joy and contentment, than the redundance of all external advantages. 2. The divine protection and providence, is the most sure and safe protection, and supplies the want of all other. The munition of rocks is thy

defence; and all other defences and refuges without this, are weak, impotent, and failing defences: "Except the Lord watch the city, the watchman watcheth but in vain."

That, therefore, which I shall fix upon, is the last of his three desires: " If he shall give me bread

to eat, and raiment to put on."

The desires of a good man, in relation to the things of this life, ought not to be lavish and extravagant; not to be of things of grandeur, or delicacy, or excess; but to be terminated in things of necessity for his present subsistence, convenient food and raiment. If Almighty God give more than this, it is matter of the greater gratitude, as it was to Jacob: "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercics, &c. for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." he gives no more, we have enough for our contentment. Almighty God, who is never worse than his word, but most commonly better, hath not given us any promise of more, neither hath he given us commission to expect or ask for more. If he gives more than necessary, he exalts his bounty and beneficence; and yet, if he gives no more, it is his bounty that he gives so much, and is matter both of our contentment and gratitude.

Thus the wise man, Agur, made his request, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me." This our Lord teacheth us to ask, in his excellent form of prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." And this is that which the Apostle prescribes, for the rule of our contentment: " And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

And truly, if it pleaseth God to allow us a sufficiency, and competency, for the necessities of our nature, we have very great reason to be contented with it, not only as it is a duty enjoined upon us, but upon most evident conviction of sound reason, in regard to Almighty God, in regard of ourselves, and in regard of others. I shall mingle these reasons together.

- 1. It becomes us to be contented, because whatsoever we have, we have from the free allowance,
 and goodness of God: he owes us nothing; but
 what we have, we have from free gift and bounty.
 If a man demands a debt of another, we think it
 just he should be paid what he demands; but if a
 man receives an alms from another, we think it reasonable that he should be content with what the
 other gives, without prescribing to the measure
 of his bounty. But the case is far stronger here;
 we are under an obligation of duty to be charitable
 to others' wants, by virtue of a divine command; but
 Almighty God is under no other law of conferring
 benefits, but of his own bounty, goodness, and will.
- 2. It becomes us to be content, because our measure and dole is given unto us, as by him that is absolute Lord of his own bounty, so by him that is the wisest dispenser of his own benefits: he knows, far better than we ourselves, what proportion is fittest for us: he hath given us enough for our necessity, and we are desirous to have somewhat more. The wise God knows, it may be, that more would do us harm, would undo us; would make us luxurious, proud, insolent, domineering, forgetful of God. The great Lord and Master of the great

family of the world, knows who are, and who are not able to bear redundancy: and therefore, if I have food convenient for me, I have reason to be content, because I have reason to believe the great and wise God knows what proportion best fits me; it may be, if I had more, I were ruined.

- 3. We must know that we are but stewards of the very external blessings of this life, and at the great audit, we must give an account of our stewardship: and those accounts will be strictly perused by the great Lord of all the family in heaven and earth. Now, if our external benefits be but proportionable to our necessities and necessary use, our account is easily and safely made: imprimis, I have received. so much of thy external blessings as were necessary for my food and clothing, and for the feeding and clothing of my family: but, on the other hand, where there is a superfluity and redundance given over and above our necessary support, our account "Where much is given, much is more difficult. will be required." There will be an account required, how the redundant overplus was employed; how much in charity, how much in other good works: and God knows, that too, too often very pitiful accounts are made of that surplusage and redundancy of a liberal estate; which will be so far from abating the account, as it will enhance it: item, so much in excess, debauchery, and riot; so much in costly apparel; so much in magnificent and vain shows, and the like.
 - 4. Our natures may be well enough supplied with little; natura paucis contenta: and whatsoever is redundant, most commonly turns to the

damage and detriment of our nature, unless it meet with a very wise proprietor: for the excess in the abuse of superfluities in eating and drinking, and gratifying our appetites, or the excess of care and pains in getting, or keeping, or disposing superfluities and redundance, commonly doth more harm, even to our natural complexions and constitution, than a mediocrity proportionate to the necessities of nature.

5. Whatsoever is more than enough for our natural support, and the necessary supply of our families, is in truth vain, useless, unserviceable; and such a man is rich but in fancy and notion, and not in truth and reality: for the use of externals is to supply our natural necessities; if I have a million of money, and yet a hundred pounds is sufficient, and as much as I shall use to bring me to my grave, the rest is vain and needless to me, and doth me no good: it is indeed my burden, and my care, and my trouble; but it is of no more use to me in my chest, than if it were in the centre of the earth. true, I have thereby a happy opportunity, if I have a large and wise heart, to dispose of it to the glory and service of God, and the good of mankind, in works of piety, charity, and humanity: but if I keep it in my chest, it is an impertinent trouble; neither useful for myself, because I need it not, I have enough without it; nor, as I order it, is it useful for others, no more than it were a hundred fathoms under ground.

6. A state of mediocrity, or supplies proportionate to my necessity, is infinitely more safe to me, even in respect of myself, than an estate of glory, wealth, power, and abundance. An estate of

mediocrity and commensurateness to our exigence and necessity, is the freest of any condition in the world from perturbations and temptations: a state and condition of want, and too narrow for our necessities, is an estate subject to some troubles and temptations: but of all conditions in the world, a redundant and over-plentiful condition is most subject to the most dangerous and pernicious temptations in the world; as, namely, forgetfulness of God, self-dependence, pride, insolence, oppression, injustice, unquietness of mind, excess, luxury, intemperance, contempt of others: and I have very often known those persons that have carried themselves steadily and commendably in a condition of mediocrity, nay, have been able to bear with victory the shocks of those temptations that arise from want and poverty; yet, when in the late times they were advanced to wealth, power, and command, were lost, and could not bear the temptations that attended grandeur, wealth, and power; and the sun of wealth and prosperity quickly disrobed them of that mantle of innocence, piety, and virtue, that they kept about them against the storms and assaults of wants and necessities. So that, certainly it requires a greater vigilance, attention, industry, and resolution, to oppose and conquer the temptations of grandeur, wealth, and power, than the temptations of want, necessity, and poverty: some patience and humility will do much to subdue the latter; but he that will acquit himself from the temptations of the former, hath need of great wisdom, moderation, sobriety, and a low esteem of the world, and especially a great and practical exercise of the fear of God, faith

in his promises, and a fixed hope and prospect of the promises of immortality and glory, whereby they may overcome the flattering and deceitful world.

7. A state of externals proportionate to our necessities, is a far more serene and safe estate in reference to others, than an estate of external grandeur, and wealth, and power. And the reasons are, First, Because the former hath nothing that others do covet or desire; but the latter hath gotten the golden ball, that the generality of mankind are fond to have, and are restless till they have gotten it; which makes the man's estate unquiet and unsafe, because he hath many competitors for what he enjoys, which are continually endeavouring to trip up his heels; just-as we see when a bird hath gotten a booty or prey, all other birds of prey are following and catching after it, and ever molesting that which hath it. Second, Because he that enjoys much, either of honour, or wealth, or power, is the object of the envy of other men, which is a busy, restless, pernicious humour; and ever picking quarrels, and finding faults, and studying and endeavouring the ruin of its object: whereas a state of mediocrity, is a state of quietness, and free from the assaults and shafts of his pestilent companions.

8. We see that all worldly matters are, by a kind of inbred and connatural necessity, subject to mutations and changes. When grandeur, honour, and wealth, are at their highest pitch, like the sun in the meridian, they stay not long there, but they have their declination. Now, the changes that are incident to greatness and wealth, are always for the worse; they most commonly take their wings and fly

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away, when they seem to be in their highest pitch of plenty and glory: and this creates in a man very great anxiety and restless fear, lest he should lose what he hath; and infinite strugglings and shiftings to keep it when it is going; and extreme disappointment, vexation, and sorrow, when it is gone. On the other hand, a state of mediocrity may have its changes too; and as it is seldom for the worse, so it is most ordinarily for the better; whereby the man hath great peace and tranquillity. We need not have a better instance of both these conditions than in Jacob, the person in the text, while he was in a state of mediocrity, and rather indeed in a strait, than in an ample condition: when he had nothing but his staff, and his supplies of bread to eat, and clothes to put on, he was in a state of great tranquillity; and that change which befel that condition, was a change not for the worse, but for the better, at least in relation to his externals, his supplies increased: but as soon as he once arrived at great wealth, under his uncle Laban, though it is true the divine Providence kept him from a total loss of it, yet he soon found that prosperous condition full of thorns and difficulties. 1. His uncle and his sons began to envy his wealth, and he began to be in great fears and jealousies lest he should be deprived of all. 2. Then to avoid that fear, he flies, and his uncle pursues him; and then he was under a new fear of loss of all he had got. 3. When that fear was over, then he fears that the rumour of his wealth, and the former displeasure of his brother Esau, might make him and all his wealth a prey to his brother; and certainly, had not the immediate

providence of Almighty God strangely interposed, he had not only felt the difficulties and unquietness of his great wealthy condition, (which were profitable for his instruction;) but he had suffered a total deprivation of it, either by Laban, or Esau, or at least by the neighbouring Shechemites, exasperated by the treachery and cruelty of his two sons, Simeon and Levi.

Upon these, and many more considerations, it is most evident, that a state of mediocrity in externals, is to be preferred before an estate of much wealth, honour, or grandeur: that of the two extremes, poverty on the one side, or very great wealth and glory on the other, the latter is in truth more dangerous and difficult than the former; but that of Agur's prayer, a state of mediocrity, "neither poverty nor riches," but food convenient for a man's condition, is the most desirable state in this life, and that which avoids the difficulty of both extremes.

I would willingly, from these considerations, therefore, learn to attain such a temper and disposition of soul, as might be safe and useful for me in relation to all these three conditions of life, which soever of them the divine Providence should send unto me.

1. In reference to a mediocrity, or such a state of externals as might be suitable to the exigence and nature of my condition in this life, I should make such a state my choice, and not my trouble: I should, with all thankfulness, acknowledge both the goodness and wisdom of Almighty God, in giving me so competent, and so safe a condition; that hath by his providence delivered me from the difficulties, and inconveniences, and dangers, and temptations

of both extremes, namely, great want and great wealth: and I shall bear my lot, not only with great patience and quietness, but with great contentment and thankfulness.

- 2. In reference to an estate of want or indigence. If it should please the divine Providence to appoint that condition to me, I should nevertheless comfort and support myself with such considerations as these. 1. Though my condition be narrow and necessitous, yet it is that, which the great wise Lord of the great family of the world hath appointed to me: I will therefore bear it with patience and resignation. 2. Though it be an estate of indigence and narrowness, yet it is such as affords me and my family life and subsistence, though not without much pains and difficulty: it might have been worse, and it may please God to make it better, when he seeth fit; I will therefore bear it with contentedness as well as patience. 3. Though my state be very narrow and pinching, yet it is possibly much more safe, than an estate of grandeur and affluence; my account is the less; my temptations not so dangerous; my cares fewer; my lessons of dependence upon God, of humility and lowliness of mind, of temperance and sobriety, of contempt of the world, of valuation of eternity and provision for it, are better learned in this extreme than in the other: I shall therefore endeavour to improve the opportunities, even of this hard condition, and bear it not only with contentedness, but thankfulness.
- 3. In reference to an estate of redundance and affluence of externals, an estate of wealth and plenty, of honour and grandeur, of power and authority,

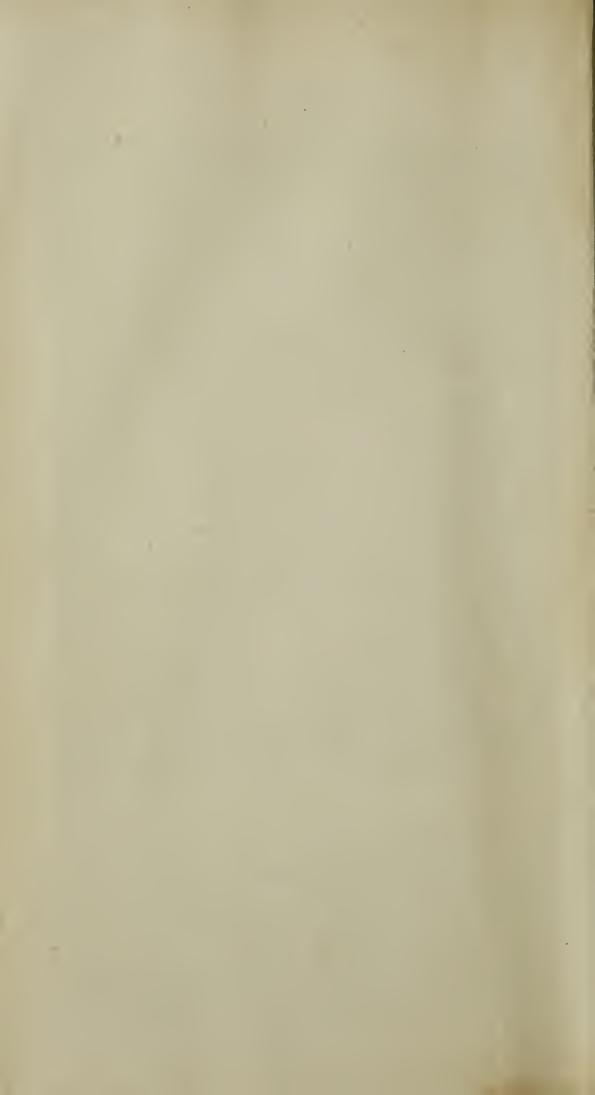
and pre-eminence, I will consider, 1. That this estate is full of temptations, and temptations of the greatest size, and the most dangerous nature; as pride and insolence, forgetfulness of God, luxury, intemperance, carnal confidence and security, contempt of others, and infinitely more; and if any of these get the advantage, they will do me more mischief, than all my wealth will do me good. 2. Therefore I will learn and exercise very great vigilance and attention, that I be not cheated into these temp-3. I will make a true estimate of the world, and of all these goodly appearances that I am attended with from it; and I will not take my measure and estimate of them by the common opinion of the world, or by their splendid outside; but I will look more strictly into them, and find whether they are not uncertain, deceiving things; what stability there is in them; what good they will do me after death; what quietness or tranquillity of mind they will give me, or rather take from me; whether they have in themselves any real influence to make me better or wiser. 4. Upon these considerations, if I find, as find I shall, that they have not that real worth in them that the vain world imagines, I will not set my heart upon them, nor place any confidence in them, nor lay out much of my love upon them, nor have any great esteem of them. 5. I will set my heart to a true and serious consideration of those durable riches, and glory, and honour, that our dear Lord hath provided for us in the life to come; and that eternal weight of glory will infinitely outweigh all the wealth, and honour, and glory, that I do or can enjoy in this world. 6. And upon this con-

sideration, also, will I rectify my judgment concerning this world, and the greatest glory of it, and thereby habituate myself to a low esteem of the wealth I have, or can have, and set up my hopes and treasure in more noble and durable enjoyments. 7. I will consider I am but a steward when all is done, and the greater my wealth or honour is, the greater my accounts must be, and the more difficult to keep them fair. 8. That in as much as I am but a steward, I will be very careful that my management of my trust may be such as will bear my Lord's scrutiny. I will not employ my stock of wealth or honour, to the dishonour of my Lord, in riot or excess, in vanity or oppression; but will do as much good with it as I can, according to the trust committed to me, that I may give a just, and fair, and comfortable account of my stewardship, when my Lord and Master calls for it. 9. That in as much as those very externals are in themselves blessings, if well employed, though not the blessings of the greatest magnitude, I will, with all humility and thankfulness, acknowledge the divine bounty to me, in entrusting me with abundance, and will employ it to his honour.

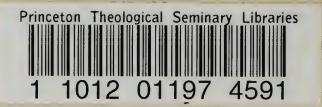
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